PCGAMES

The only PC games mag you'll ever need – Over 35 new games reviewed and rated!

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August 1994
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2

2 HIGH-DENSITY DISKS!
Bursting with 7Mbs of fully-playable gaming goodness!

NO DISK? ASK YOUR NEWSAGENT!

NO DISK? ASK YOUR NEWSAGENT!

TALLY HO HO HO
MOTHERS RUIN
O'NEILL
ALLEY OF DEATH
PIPE DREAM
CADAVER CORP

SCOOP REVIEW!

THE CHAOS ENGINE

"I say, old boy – did you spill my port?"

WIN! 3 NEC triple-speed CD-ROM drives!

- *STOP!* Don't buy a game until you've read our top reviews of Theme Park, Pacific Air War, The Settlers and many more!
- *LOOK!* Massive playguides for Pagan: Ultima VIII, Myst and Beneath A Steel Sky, plus loads of hacks and cracks!
- *LISTEN!* We take the mystery out of installing a soundcard!

08
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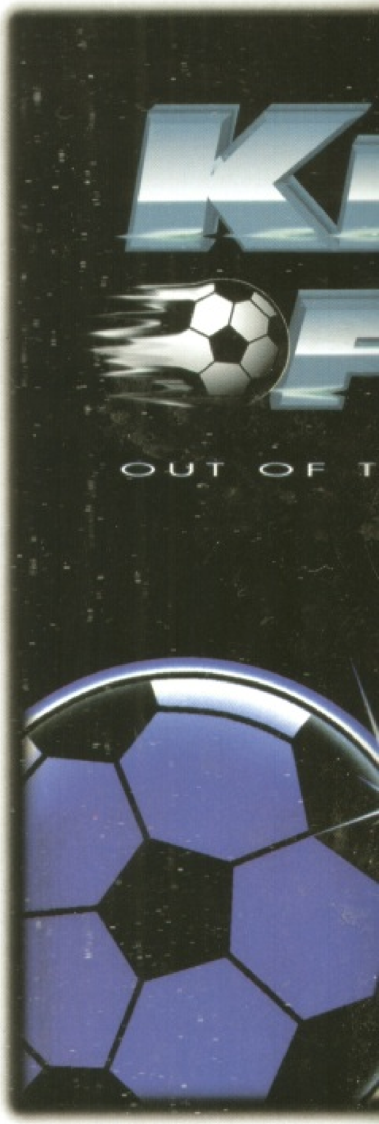
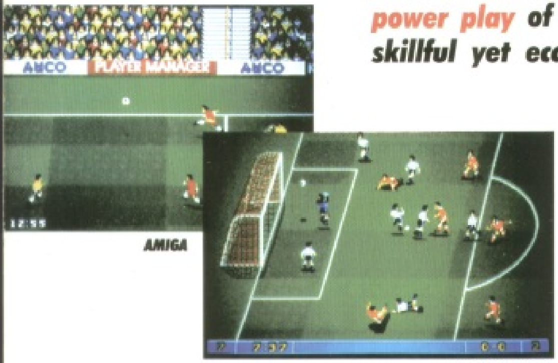
KICK

you know it's...



International action at its dazzling best. The atmosphere is electric as the stage is set for the World's best players to display their awesome skills. **KICK OFF 3** is a game for the true soccer fan. Top footballing Nations from 5 continents battle for soccer's biggest prize - The World Cup. Thrill to the **one touch football** of the South Americans, the **power play** of the North Europeans and the skillful yet eccentric African nations. Stamp your authority on the match using the key players within the team. Each country has its own style play dependent on the way these players are used. Be sure to play to your team's strengths. Use



AMIGA

PC COMPATIBLES

CD32 PC & COMPATIBLES PC CD ROM

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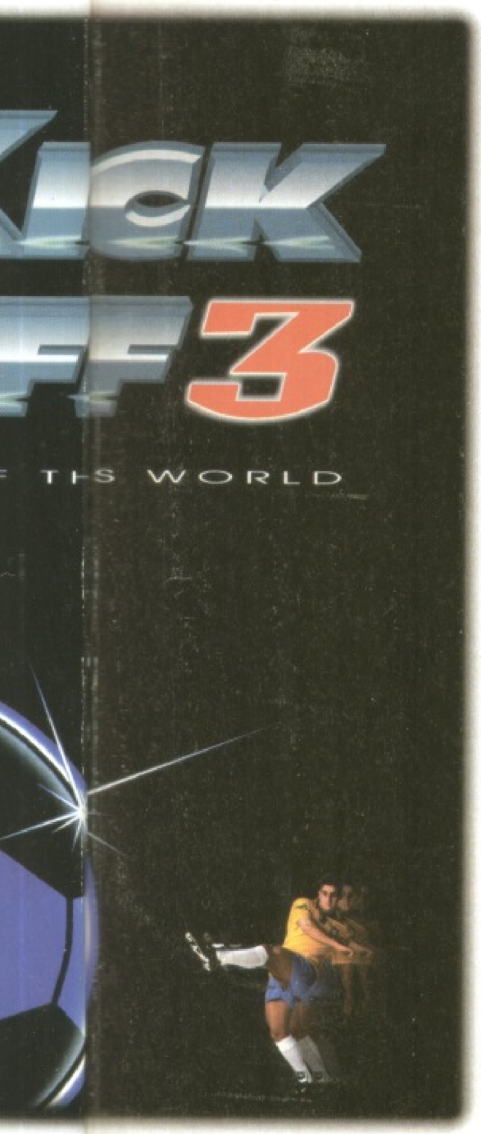
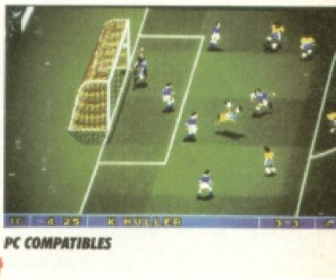
OFF 3



the Brazilian **Playmakers** to split the opposition with pinpoint passes or the German **Sweeper** to build from the back. Play the ball to the dashing full backs from Cameroon or release the flying Dutch **Wingers**



PC COMPATIBLES

KICK OFF 3 is packed full of dynamic features that set it apart from any other football game.

Over 2000 frames of animation for smooth, fast flowing International action and multi directional pitch scrolling. Thirty different **SET PLAYS** for corners and free kicks give the most dramatic dead ball situations ever. A practice mode allows you to specialise dribbling, overhead kicks, volleys, flicks, diving headers and the deadly **AFTER TOUCH**. Switch your tactics and your side's style of play with a **TEAM TALK** at the right time. Speed and ball control options give instant playabilty for novice and master gamer alike. Soccer realism with Match facts, a Man of the Match award, action replays, all the latest soccer laws and much more.

kickin'

AMIGA 500/600/1200

ANCO

Industrial Estate, Lawson Road, Dartford, Kent DA1 5BH Tel: 0322 292518 Fax: 0322 293422

Hurrah!

And hurrah again! The sun's out, the pavements are cracking under the heat, beautiful women are wandering about wearing very little in the way of clothing... and we're trapped in the office producing the finest PC games magazine this side of Tatooine.

Not that we mind. Oh no. We love it. Really. Besides, who needs a tan when you've got great games like The Chaos Engine (exclusively reviewed this issue) and Theme Park to play? And who needs to ogle luvverly laydies when you can drool over preview shots of exciting new titles like Scavenger 4 and Inferno? Er...

Anyway, enjoy the issue...

David Upchurch
Editor

Dave, our normally fun-loving chubster, was a bit disappointed to hear recently that Pierce Brosnan has been selected to play the new James Bond. "It should have been me," he lamented. "I can do a passable Sean Connery impersonation. Listen — 'Yesh, Mish Moneypenny, shaken not shtirred, shpicy shaushages...'" Unfortunately, while Dave may sound a *little* like 'our' Sean, he's sadly lacking in the looky-likey department...

Dean Evans
Assistant Editor

Dean's in love — and that's official. Unfortunately, the object of his desire is MicroProse's 1942: Pacific Air War. "It's so *brilliant*!" he enthused, before sticking out his arms and running around the office making strange engine noises. "That's one in the eye for you, Fritz!" he screamed as he divebombed Dave's desk. Dean is currently undergoing treatment — he had a comfortable night and is now resting...

Alex Fraser
Staff Writer

As Dave struck James Bond-like poses and Dean 'buzzed' his PC, oh-so-sensible Alex was heard to mutter, "It's alright them mucking about, but I've got work to do..." He then put on a chicken costume and marched around shouting "Roll up! Roll up! Come and see Milky World, the biggest and most exciting theme park in the Western Hemisphere!" Bullfrog have got a lot to answer for, I can tell you...

Dave Kelsall
Art Editor

Dave K. has always been a Star Wars fan, so he was cock-a-hoop when we told him we were going to do a feature about all the Star Wars games past, present and future, and he got even more excited when he heard the latest news from LucasArts (see page 10). In fact he's so Star Wars mad, he even collects those plastic toy figures they used to do — even though they cost £14 each. We're paying him far too much, you know...

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Cryptic quote: "We're Star Wars crazy, we're Star Wars mad!"

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PCG
MADE WITH NATURAL LIPOZOMES

NO CRAP OR WAFFLE–GUARANTEED

6 Disks!

This is where we reveal the inner mysteries of those black obelisks so firmly attached to the front cover of the magazine.

WIN!
A NEC triple-speed CD-ROM drive!
Turn to page 112 NOW!

10 News

Extra! Extra! Read all about it! LucasArts reveals its follow-up to TIE Fighter! DID announces TFXtra! Maxis in rumoured Sim Skyscraper shock!

18 Fax Ups!

You know how Monkey Kong ended up being called Donkey Kong because of a spelling mistake on an international Telex? Well, just take a look at some of the games similar human error could've produced...

21 Previews

Ah yes, the mists are clearing now... I see a tall, dark stranger... And a trip abroad... Hang on, I also see Psygnosis' Scavenger 4, Team 17's Project-X, VIE's Creature Shock and a whole load of other up-to-the-minute previews... Who's been fiddling with my crystal ball..?

39 Reviews

It's been a bit quiet on the software front recently, but even so there are some top games about — in fact, no less than FOUR games have been awarded the coveted PC GAMES STAR, namely The Chaos Engine, Theme Park, The Settlers and 1942: Pacific Air War!

Are Original Games Dead?

When was the last time you saw a *really* original game? Quite a while, yes? Are there no new ideas left? And if not, what does that means for the future of PC gamesplaying? We investigate on page 34...

80 CD Updates

A round-up of all the games re-released on CD, including SimCity, Simon The Sorceror and Sam & Max Hit The Road.

82 Budget Reviews

Thanks to the burgeoning budget market, you can now pick up PC games for less than the price of eight pints of lager. We help you decide whether to buy one or just go out and get smashed instead.

86 Shareware

Cheap is often cheerful, as you'll discover in our guide to the best Shareware games around.

90 Power Up!

So you want the best tips, do you? Well, you've come to the right place! Here you'll find complete solutions to Beneath A Steel Sky and Myst, a player's guide to the tougher parts of Pagan: Ultima VIII and whole lot more!

104 Star Wars Memories

With LucasArts' TIE Fighter due any day now, we thought it was about time we took a look back at previous attempts to translate the magic of Star Wars into a computer game.

Is This The Worst PC Game Ever?
Turn to page 51 to find out...

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MonitorMan™

Theme Park

Welcome to Bullfrog's Theme Park! LAUGH at the men in funny animal costumes! SCREAM at the loop-the-loop rollercoaster! READ the review starting on page 58...

106 Dr Spanner's Casebook

Got a bad case of PC technofear? Then let Dr Spanner cool your fevered brow. This issue the good Doctor takes a look at installing a soundcard.

111 Letters

Yes, we've actually got some this month!

112 Win A NEC Triple-Speed CD-ROM Drive!

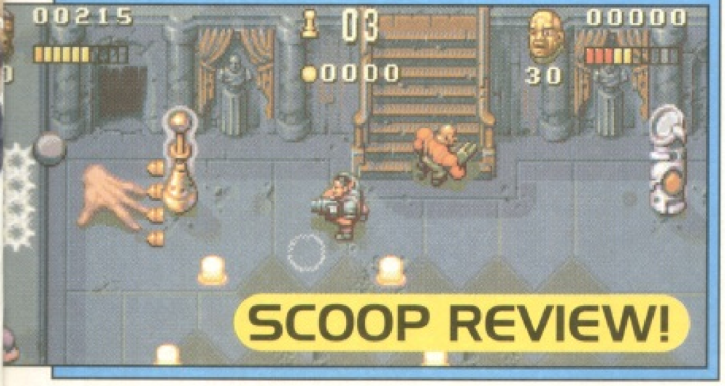
There are three up for grabs in this smashing Central Intelligence compo!

114 Next Issue!

You won't believe what we've got lined up for you next time around — but that's because we'll probably have made it all up as usual.

The Chaos Engine

In another PC GAMES exclusive, we grab the first review of The Bitmap Brothers' stunningly-playable new shoot-'em-up! It's a corker — and you can find out why on page 40...



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Disks!

Bet you can't wait to play our fantastic demos of Zool 2, Cool Spot and Raptor, eh? Don't panic — just turn the page and you'll be up and running in no time...

Disks!

Two HD coverdisks! Over 7Mb of fully-playable demos! There's none of your non-interactive, rolling demo rubbish here. They're top arcade games one and all — and here's how you play 'em...

PCGAMES

Requires 256-colour VGA, 2Mb of RAM and DOS 5.0; 386 PC recommended

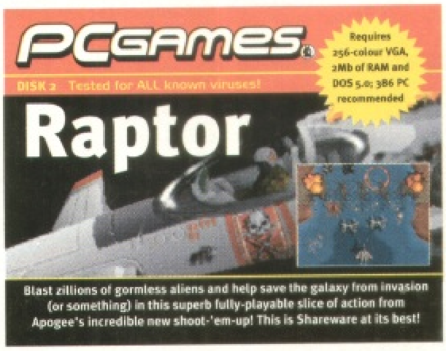
DISK 1 Tested for ALL known viruses!

Battle of the platform giants!

Zool 2 vs Cool Spot

He's Zool! And he's 2! Run and jump your way through this EXCLUSIVE fully-playable level from Gremlin's top platform romp!

He's a spot! And he's cool! Run and jump your way through this EXCLUSIVE fully-playable level from Virgin's — oh, you know!


PCGAMES

Requires 256-colour VGA, 2Mb of RAM and DOS 5.0; 386 PC recommended

DISK 2 Tested for ALL known viruses!

Raptor

Blast zillions of gormless aliens and help save the galaxy from invasion (or something) in this superb fully-playable slice of action from Apogee's incredible new shoot-'em-up! This is Shareware at its best!

MAKING A BOOT DISK

If you're having any problems running any of the games try making a boot disk. Take a freshly formatted floppy disk, slap it into the disk drive (I'll assume it's drive A for the moment) and type: **SYS A:**. The system files will be transferred and — voila — you have one boot disk on your hands.

All you then need to do is leave the floppy in the drive, reset your machine and try loading the game again. Don't take the disk out of the machine as it boots up because you want the PC to read the information from the floppy rather than the hard disk.

Zool 2

Gremlin Graphics

He's Zool! He's back! And this time he's 2! Yes, the Battle Of The Platform Giants begins right here with our EXCLUSIVE demo of Gremlin's awesomely addictive platform-jumping, sword-spinning Ninja from the Nth Dimension.

In this fully-playable first level of Zool 2 you can play either Zool or Zooz, a female Ninja from the, er, Nth dimension. Guiding the deadly martial artist of your choice, you must jump, hack and run around the gameworld, zapping meanies, grabbing bonus fruits and dodging springs, pits and spikes. There are also several secret rooms, packed with points, waiting to be discovered.

Loading Your Coverdisks...

① It couldn't be simpler. Remove your disks (the square black things with the bit of metal on them) from their beautifully-crafted protective wrapping and put the disk of your choice gently into your disk drive.

② Type **A:** (or **B:** depending on the drive type) and then press the Return key to log onto your gorgeous PC GAMES disk.

③ Type the adage **PCG** and press the Return key. Choose the program you want to load using the up/down cursor keys. This month all three games must be selected from Disk 1.

To complete the level you must first collect sufficient fruity bonuses. When you've picked up 99 — as shown by the counter in the bottom-left corner of the screen — you can make your way to the exit (it can be found to the far-right of the level, and its direction is also shown by the arrow next to the 'fruit counter').

Zool 2 is the wildest, brightest and fastest platform ride available on the PC. Who needs Sonic? With Zool 2 you can be a Ninja.

Loading The Game...

After you've installed the Zool 2 demo onto your hard disk, log onto the directory where you installed the demo and type **ZOOL2** to start. Press the Spacebar to click through the loading screens.

Game Controls

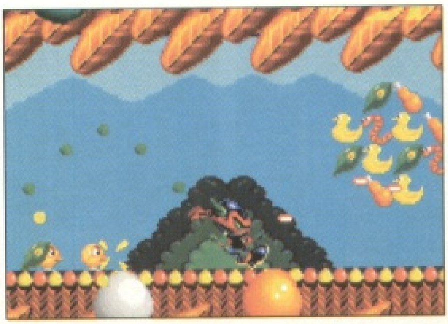
When the options screen appears you can choose whether you want to play with just the music or just the sound effects; pick your preferred difficulty level from Easy, Medium and Hard; and select a one- or two-player game.

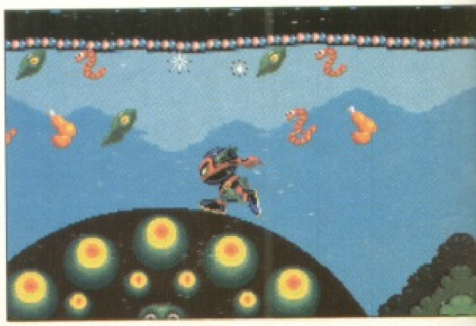
Hitting the ESCAPE key at any time during the intro screens also allows you to do stuff like turn the sounds on/off; to toggle the background on/off (this speeds up the game slightly if it's running sluggishly); to select and calibrate a joystick and to redefine the default keyboard controls. Press ESCAPE again to close the options menu.

But if you're quite happy with the way things are, select START and press the Spacebar to begin. The default keyboard controls are as follows:

Left	Left cursor arrow.
Right	Right cursor arrow.
Jump	Up cursor arrow.
Crouch	Down cursor arrow.
Fire	Spacebar.
Use weapon	Press Up and Space Bar.

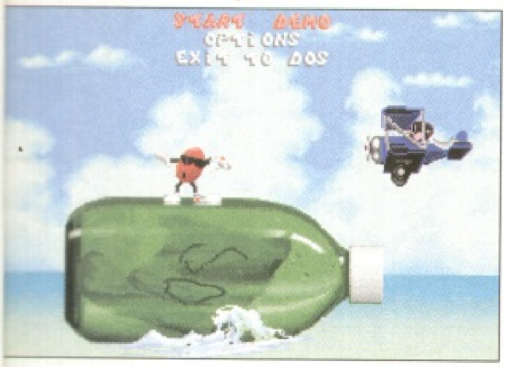
Press ESCAPE and then F12 to quit back to DOS.





Cool Spot

Virgin Interactive Entertainment



Not just one EXCLUSIVE platform demo, but TWO! Yes, next up in the Battle Of The Platform Giants is Virgin's superbly animated Megadrive conversion of Cool Spot — just the sort of game for the summer, if you ask me.

He's a spot and — yes! — he's also Cool, and your task is to guide the heroic, red tiddlywink across the beach, leaping sand dunes, riding balloons and zapping flies and numerous seaside crustaceans.

What do you have to do? Simply run, jump, zap the marauding meanies and collect the little red spots. When you've collected enough spots, you'll be allowed to free one of your friends who's held captive in a cage hidden somewhere on the level. Once you've found the cage, just shoot the lock to free your trapped chum.

(By the way, when the game starts, try jumping onto the bottle and jumping up if you're looking some secret 'things'. Just a hint...)

Do you want fun? Do you want to get to the beach without having to sit in traffic jams in the middle of Dorset? Let's go surfin' now, everybody's learning how, come on a... well, you get the general idea.

Loading The Game...

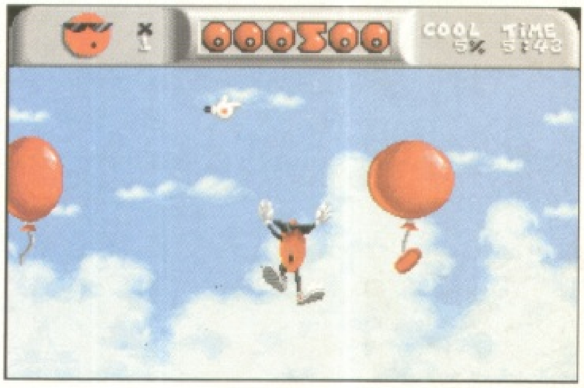
After you've installed the Cool Spot demo onto your hard disk, log onto the directory where you installed the demo and type **SPOT** to start.

If the Cool Spot demo doesn't initially recognise your soundcard you will be prompted to run the SETSND program. Type **SETSND** and Return and choose the appropriate sound configuration.

Game Controls

It's not very complicated this month as far as controls go, is it? Hmmm. Anyway, if you're not happy with the following keyboard controls, choose the Options menu on the title screen and simply redefine the keys by following the on-screen prompts. As for the preset default controls they are:

Left	Left cursor arrow.
Right	Right cursor arrow.
Up	Up cursor arrow.
Down	Down cursor arrow.
Fire	Left CTRL key.
Jump	Left ALT key.



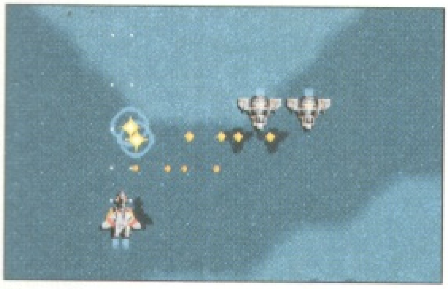
Help! I need somebody! Help!

Zool 2, Cool Spot and Raptor need a minimum of 580K of free base memory and 2Mb of Expanded (EMS) memory to run and, providing you have this, not Extended memory (XMS), they shouldn't cause you any problems at all.

● The Zool 2, Cool Spot and Raptor demos do not work under Windows and may not be compatible with Doublespace, QEMM 386 or Stacker disk compression software. You have been warned. So don't blame us.

Raptor

Apogee Software



The Earth is being invaded by horrible, mutant, slime-dripping alien scum — and only you can stop them. Yes, you, you with the magazine in your hand, you are mankind's last hope, the best fighter jock around, a pilot who doesn't know the meaning of the word fear (or the word crepuscular for that matter), a pilot who doesn't care about impossible odds or the prospect of a horrible, flaming death.

Raptor is the latest Apogee shareware shoot-em'-up, and in this fully-playable demo you get to enjoy the first four waves of this fast-'n'-furious vertically-scrolling alien blast. You are the hero. Raptor is the game. So let's get out there and kick some alien butt, shall we?

Loading The Game...

The Raptor demo is a bit on the large side, so we've split the game across both this month's coverdisks. When you are prompted to "Insert Last Disk of the Backup Set", take Disk 1 out and put in Disk 2. The install program will then prompt you to insert Disk 1 again so insert Disk 1 you should.

After you've installed the Raptor demo onto your hard disk, log onto the directory where you installed the demo, type **SETUP** to configure your soundcard and the **RAP** to start the game.

Game Controls

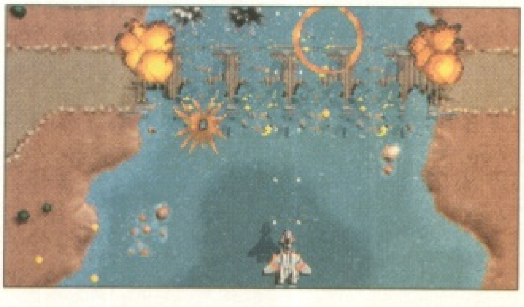
Raptor is a fast-paced, up-down-left-right-fire game, and there is an in-depth help file in the game that you can view by tapping the F1 key. As for the controls, they are as follows:

Left	Left cursor arrow.
Right	Right cursor arrow.
Up	Up cursor arrow.
Down	Down cursor arrow.
Fire	Left CTRL key.

To start the game, choose the NEW MISSION option, enter your name and a callsign, and then select a difficulty level. When the hangar appears, select FLY MISSION and then either AUTOPILOT or BRAVO SECTOR to begin the game.

The aim of the game is simply to shoot everything on the screen: spacecraft, buildings, bridges, boats... you name it, you can shoot it. Dodge the enemy ships, pick up the yellow cash bonuses and shoot the white lozenge-shaped silos for extra weapons.

At the end of every wave you can spend your money in the ye olde Raptor shoppe, upgrading your weapons and re-energising your shields. Obviously the more challenging the difficulty level is, the higher the cash bonuses are that you're able to pick up. So, don't wonder why you can't afford the top-of-the-range missile launcher on the Rookie Training level, okay?



The Fine Print Bit . . .

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My Disks Don't Work!

Due to the massively huge number of disks that are duplicated, the occasional one might be a touch faulty. If you're unlucky enough to get one of these, don't despair because help is at hand. Whatever you do DON'T SEND THEM TO US! Simply send them off to the following address with an SAE for 28p:

PC GAMES Bodged Disks, Diskxpress,
Unit 3, Old Coalyard Farm
Northleach, Gloucestershire GL54 3EP

If you think you can solve your problems over the phone, try calling the disk helpline on **(0451) 860770**. The helpline is open between 3pm and 5pm on weekdays.

NONE BUT T

"A fighter pilot was alone. Some
he found his way back by guess
fuel and ditched. Imagine: a
25 million square miles.

192
THE PACIFI
64
64

In the South Pacific in 1942 the US lacked superiority in shipborne fighters; but their pilots were outstanding. Carrier commanders accepted none but the finest flyers.

Only the bravest and the best became carrier aircrew.

Join them.

- Fly any one of ten historically accurate US or Japanese planes.
- Recreate battles that turned the tide: Midway, Coral Sea, Eastern Solomons, Santa Cruz and the Philippine Sea
- Jump into the Virtual Cockpit: allowing 'swivelneck' visibility - especially in dogfights!.
- Relive all the heart stopping, flak-flinging moments by saving or replaying missions as mini-movies with fully flexible camera angles.

For IBM PC Compatibles

MICROPROSE

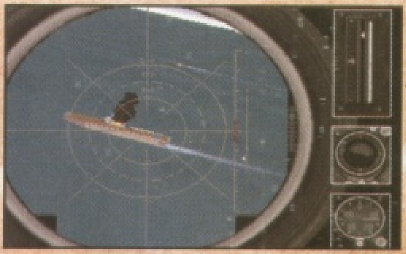
FRANTIC DOGFIGHTS, DEATH DEFYING DIVE

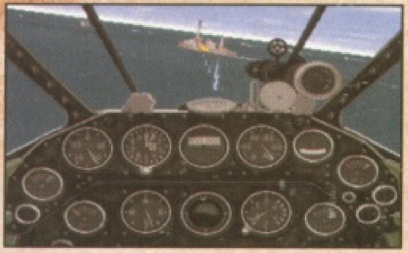
T THE BRAVE...

ome
ness
: a
les.

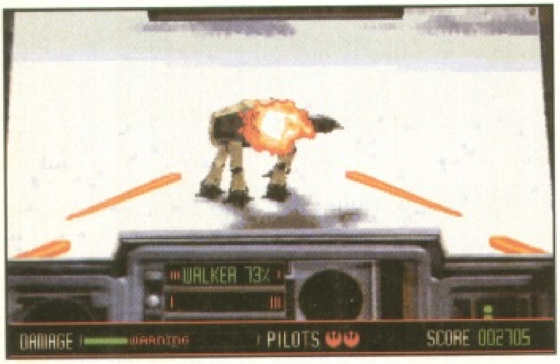
times 200 miles from his mother ship,
and good luck. Often, he ran out of
small speck in a vast ocean of
A flyer waiting for rescue."

942
FIC IC AIR WAR
64





VE BOMB ATTACKS AND TERRIFYING TORPEDO RUNS



US Gold Lose LucasArts To VIE

It has been announced that, as of June 10th, 1994, Virgin Interactive Entertainment will be handling the UK sales and marketing of all future software releases from the top American developer LucasArts.

"LucasArts is perhaps America's greatest entertainment software exporter," said Tim Chaney, VIE's MD. "Our products complement each other strongly in the high-end games market, and together we form a significant force in PC CD-ROM distribution."

This news comes as little surprise to industry insiders. For many months there has been heavy speculation that LucasArts might be 'on the move', and even rumours that it was going to set up its own European office.

WASH me
Use funnel
Give
Pick up
Use
Open
Look at
Push
Close
Talk to
Pull

US Gold, which has handled LucasArts' games for the last seven years, seems unperturbed by the news. According to Geoff Brown, US Gold's MD, there was the possibility of a "conflict of interests" emerging as US Gold began to invest in its own CD-ROM products.

In CTW, the software industry's weekly tradepaper, he was quoted as saying: "We're really re-allocating resources rather than supporting what you could argue is a competitor. LucasArts has been very successful for us, but it is only three percent of our business."

Although unconfirmed at the time of going to press, the first game to be published under the new LucasArts/VIE alliance is most likely to be the long-awaited TIE Fighter, a full-blown sequel to the massively successful X-Wing. This will then rapidly be followed by Star Wars Screen Entertainment, a compilation of screensavers, screen posters and behind-the-scenes information. And believe us when we tell you it's a lot more interesting than it sounds...

There's also some interesting info on LucasArts next game after TIE Fighter. Called Dark Forces, it's tantalisingly described by a VIE spokesperson as "Doom meets Star Wars" — which, it has to be said, is a potentially killer combo that sends us at PC GAMES into spasms of excitement. More news soon...

SEGA TARGET PC CD-ROM!

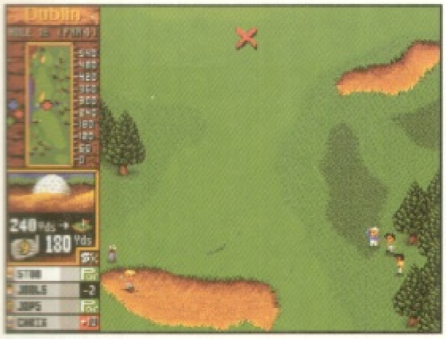
Console manufacturer and leading games developer Sega has revealed that it may be releasing some of its key titles on PC CD-ROM.

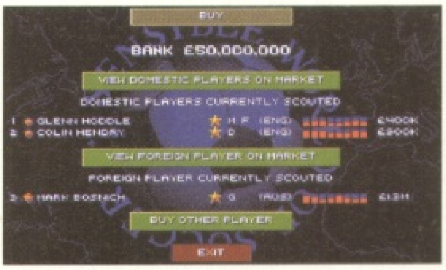
Tom Kalinske, president of Sega of America, was quoted in CTW as saying "...we have formed a small group in the US to begin porting some Sega CD titles to PC — no other formats are contemplated."

Should these plans come to fruition, it will be the first time Sega's games have ever appeared on any format other than its own.

There's no information as to which games will appear on PC. According to Kalinske, however: "These will be titles most acceptable to an older audience and may or may not be our biggest hits, dependent on ability to port to PC."

Here at PC GAMES we'd like to see any of the Virtua games converted, such as Virtua Fighters, Virtua Racing and — gulp! — Virtua Star Wars! Oooh, I feel a bit giddy...

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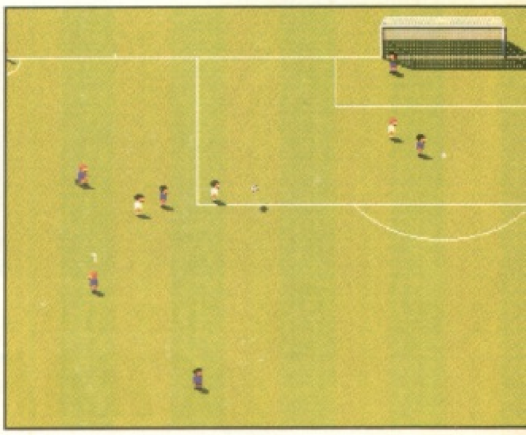


More **Fodder!**

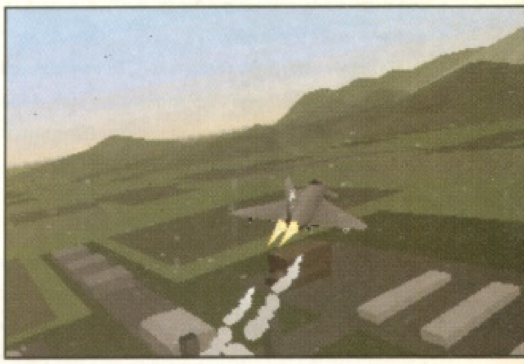
Fans of that game where little blokes run around shooting each other — otherwise known Cannon Fodder — will no doubt be pleased to learn that a sequel is already in the pipeline, and once again it'll be released on Virgin Interactive Entertainment.

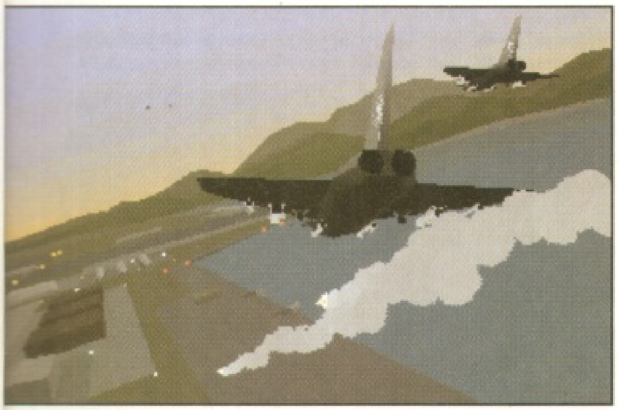
Sensible Software, who created the first game, have only just started work on the Amiga version, with a PC adaptation not due until early next year. When pressed for information, a Virgin spokesperson said: "It's too early to say what it'll be like yet. I expect there will be some new weapons and vehicles." Informative, eh? There will be more news soon, we hope.

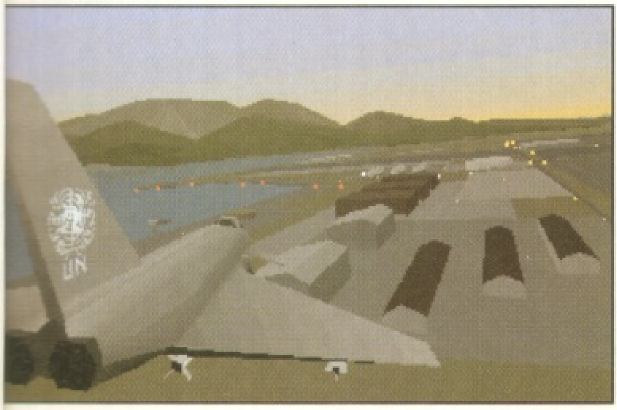
It has to be said, Sensible must be burning the mid-night oil at the moment. Not only are they currently developing Sensible World Of Soccer for Renegade, but they're also beavering away on Sensible Golf, again for Virgin.

Sensible World Of Soccer is, of course, the long-awaited sequel to the greatest footy game of all time, Empire Soc... er, sorry, Sensible Soccer. Not only will the game feature improvements such as stats for the players (so that they'll all play differently), referees and physios, but there will also be a comprehensive player management option as well, where you'll be able to personally guide your team to victory. The kick-off looks like taking place towards the end of the year.

From the football pitch to the golf course, and Sensible Golf. Employing Sensible's 'Tiny Geezers Technology' (as a US company like Origin would no doubt call it), this promises to be a refreshing and, knowing Sensible, no-doubt humourous take on the businessman's favourite sport. As a concession to those who like their graphics big, the view toggles from the bird's-eye view to close-up when players tee-off. Start writing your notes to Santa now — this is due out at Christmas.







TFX Soars **Again!**

After the huge success of TFX last Christmas, Runcorn-based developers DID have been working away on a sequel to their superfast polygon flight sim, TFX.

Originally the second TFX outing was going to be an add-on data disk called TFXtra which promised to add new scenarios, more weapons and modem, network and serial link software. This is still true, but TFXtra has turned out much bigger than DID expected it to be and incorporates better and faster 3D graphics technology, numerous gameplay enhancements, multi-player comms software and possibly even an SVGA option.

Set five years after the last TFX, the world is now hovering on the brink of global war. Once again you must return to active NATO duty, taking part in an interactive storyline that encompasses new scenarios (including Central Africa and South East Asia — The North Korean Attack), new weapons and new aircraft. "We didn't want to do another stand-alone game and rip people off," says Martin Kenwright, DID's boss, "that's why we're going to release TFXtra for under £20".

If all this wasn't prolific enough, DID are currently putting the finishing touches to Inferno and are also heavily involved in the development of a fully-fledged EFA simulator for the military, much of which appears in TFXtra. The development teams have also been working on an as-yet-untitled helicopter sim which, according to Martin Kenwright, DID's boss, is "like TFX but with Alone In The Dark people flying big helicopters."

Actually, the chopper game has changed a lot since PC GAMES last saw it and is now much more impressive, featuring a better, faster and more detailed 3D engine (just wait until you see it!), virtual people and all the DID bells and whistles you've come to expect. We'll have more exclusive news on this and TFXtra as soon as we can. Don't you go away now.

Hello! I'm Imp, the Devil's officially-sanctioned advocate. This month I'm going to say something that'll really make your blood boil, and that's..

"Doom is *CRAP!*"

Yes, I'm sorry all you Doom deadbeats out there, but it is. Now I know what you're thinking. You're thinking "Dear old Imp, always trying to be controversial for controversial's sake. Doom is brilliant, you know that. The only thing you don't like is that the whole game is about killing demons — your own kin."

Well, the latter's not a problem — I enjoy killing my fellow Hell dwellers as much as anybody. Sorry, I really do think Doom is crap — and I'll you why.

First, let's strip away those lovely, swoonsome texture-mapped 3D graphics and take an objective look at the gameplay. What do you do? You run around mazes, killing monsters, collecting treasure and power-ups and finding keys to open doors. Brilliant — it's Gauntlet, a game that appeared in the arcades ten years ago. How innovative.

But I'm not knocking Doom just for being unoriginal — that's a criticism that can be levelled at 99.999% of games. It's also fatally flawed by the fact that once the initial thrill of shooting lots of things which die in an amusingly gory way has worn off, you never real feel that much incentive to keep on playing.

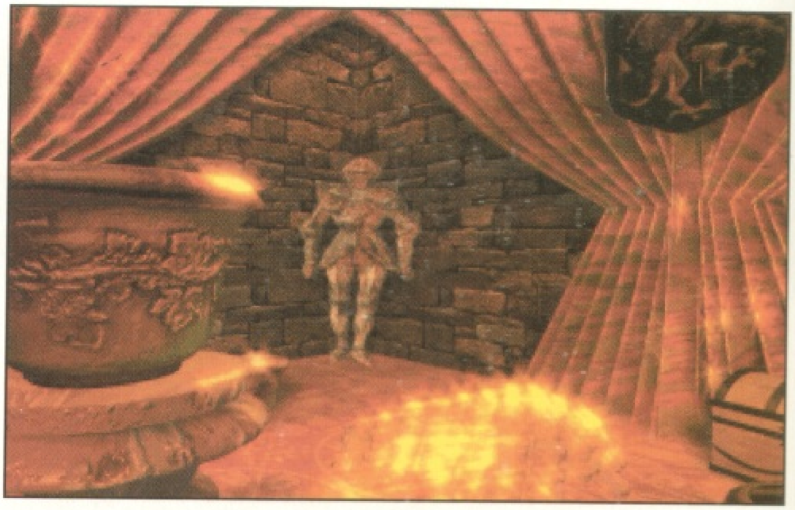
In fact, in terms of game design and structure Doom is a bit of a dog's dinner. So the monsters get harder and the graphics change as you progress — big deal! The gameplay never evolves — it's just an endless, repetitive round of dodge-shoot, dodge-shoot, dodge-shoot.

And where are the rewards or signposts that indicate you're doing well? End-of-level bosses, for all their faults, at least give the player a sense of achievement, a feeling that they're making some sort of progress through the game. I know Doom has two of them, but there should be more.

The only real encouragement you're given to carry on playing is the promise of bigger, meatier weapons in the later levels. But again, this is nothing that exciting — all they let you do is kill more monsters, but in a slightly different way.

Doom is an unoriginal, repetitive and deeply flawed game. You'd hope that it'd take a lot more than flashy 3D to obscure faults of such magnitude. Sadly, it seems, it doesn't.

● Do you agree or disagree with what Imp has to say? Why not write in with your views to: PC GAMES, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. Incidentally, Imp's opinions are his own, and in no way reflect those of PC GAMES or its publishers.



Revenge Is **Sweet!**

It's been revealed that Cryo, the top French development team who produced MegaRace (reviewed last issue), are working on a new CD-only PC game by the name of Revenge, which will be released by Mindscape. According to a Mindscape spokesperson, Revenge is "like Wing Commander meets Commanche: Maximum Overkill."

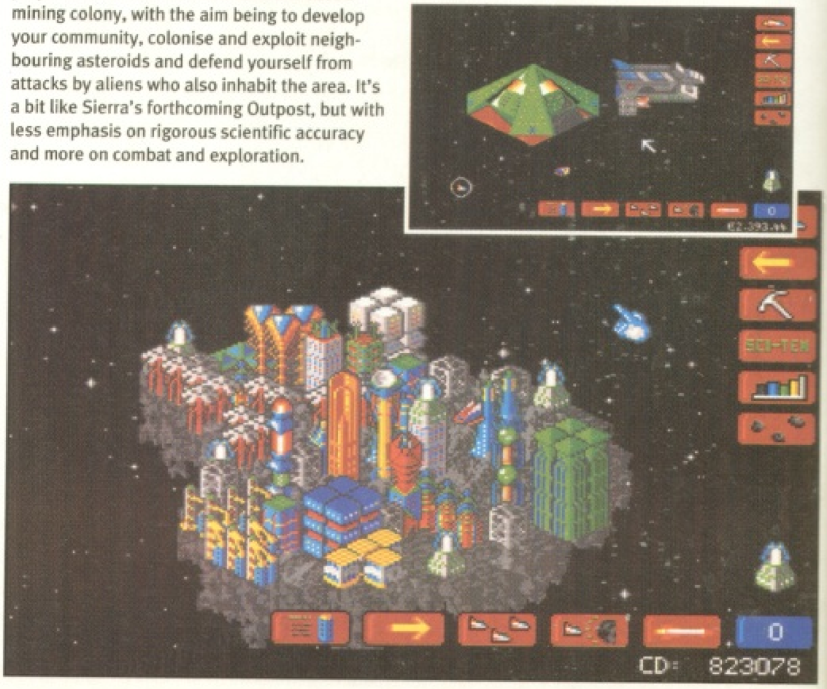
There's no release date set for it as yet, and we'll give you more news as we get it. In the meantime, feast your eyes on the above shot of Cryo's Dragon Lore, which is at a far more advanced stage of development and should be ready for review next issue.

K240 Cometh!

Gremlin has announced that it is to convert its successful Amiga game K240 to the PC.

A pseudo-sequel to Gremlin's God game Utopia, K240 is a strategy game that puts the player in control of an small asteroid-based mining colony, with the aim being to develop your community, colonise and exploit neighbouring asteroids and defend yourself from attacks by aliens who also inhabit the area. It's a bit like Sierra's forthcoming Outpost, but with less emphasis on rigorous scientific accuracy and more on combat and exploration.

The decision to go ahead with the Amiga-to-PC conversion has only just been made, so it's unlikely you'll see anything on it before the year's end at the very earliest.



Invention Corner!

Getting two joysticks to work on the PC has always been a pain but now, with Bluepoint's new Red-Eye joypads, you can play, say, two-player Mortal Kombat and, if you want to, stand up to 40 feet away from the screen.

With the Red-Eye IR2 pack (RRP £49.95) you get two joypads (batteries required) and an infrared sensor that plugs into your joystick port. The joypad movements are transmitted to the sensor in the same way a TV remote control switches channels on your television and, because there is no cabling, as long the infrared signal has a clear path to the sensor you can stand (or sit) wherever you want.

The Red-Eye also overcomes the two-player problem by allowing you to designate each joypad as an independant controller and, as both are controlled by infrared signals, only the sensor itself needs to be plugged into the joystick port.

The Red-Eye IR2 joypad pack will be available in July.

- Bluepoint is also poised to leap bravely into the CD-ROM market with a new, double-speed IDE CD-ROM drive (RRP £119.95). Nothing special about a cheap CD-ROM you might say, but hold your horses, batten down your hatches, did you notice the abbreviation IDE in the last sentence?

The IDE (Integrated Drive Electronics) drive, the first of its kind, doesn't mean you have to fiddle about with expansion cards or suffer the frustrations of a sound card IRQ conflict. In fact, the IDE CD drive simply connects to your existing I/O card in the same way as a hard disk drive and, compared to most of todays CD drives, is a veritable breeze to install and configure.

The advantage of IDE is its convenience and theoretically improved data transfer. The lack of a dedicated expansion card means the whole caboodle should work perfectly with any soundcard and it also chops the price down by a third. In fact, Bluepoint are planning to bundle the drive with a 8-bit soundcard, so in effect you could have a complete multimedia pack for just under £150.

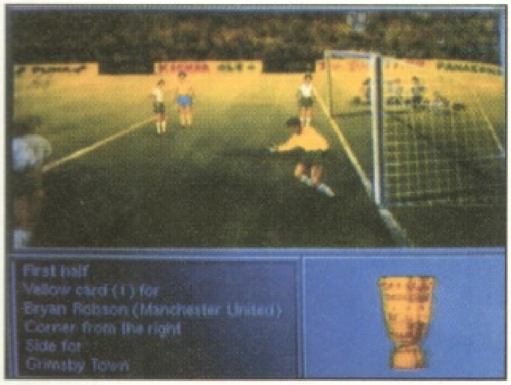
For more information contact Bluepoint on (0908) 367473 or Fax them on (0908) 277002.

- *Later this month, Advanced Gravis (producers of the acclaimed UltraSound soundcard) plan to release the Phoenix Flight and Weapons Control System, a joystick that provides throttle and rudder controls and 24 user-programmable buttons. Better still, you can just plug the Phoenix into the back of your PC and start playing straight away. Unlike the Thrustmaster, Gravis promise that there is no complicated software to install or settings to tweak.*

It's simplicity itself and, because you can easily program each of the joystick's fire buttons to execute any game command (including keyboard taps and mouse clicks), the Phoenix is instantly compatible with all the latest flight sims and space games on the market. Does it work with TIE Fighter? Yep. Can I use it with TFX? Absolutely.

Gravis are already on the leading edge of soundcard development and from what we've seen the Phoenix should grab a sizeable slice of the ever-growing joystick market. As for the price, well there's nothing confirmed as yet but as soon as we know, you'll know. It's damned impressive, take it from me.

For more information contact Gravis on (0293) 538666 or fax them on (0293) 538414.



First half
Yellow card (1) for
Bryan Robson (Manchester United)
Corner from the right
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Ascon Stay On The **Ball!**

Having created the ultimate Renaissance Era trading game with the Patrician (although there wasn't that much competition so it wasn't that difficult), German coders Ascon have turned their minds to... football.

On The Ball is an in-depth football management game which, so it is claimed, will "set new standards in both realism and presentation". It certainly looks very comprehensive, allowing up to four would-be Terry Venables to play simultaneously and offering them a whole stack of options that affect just about every aspect of how their team is run — you can even decide to give TV interviews!

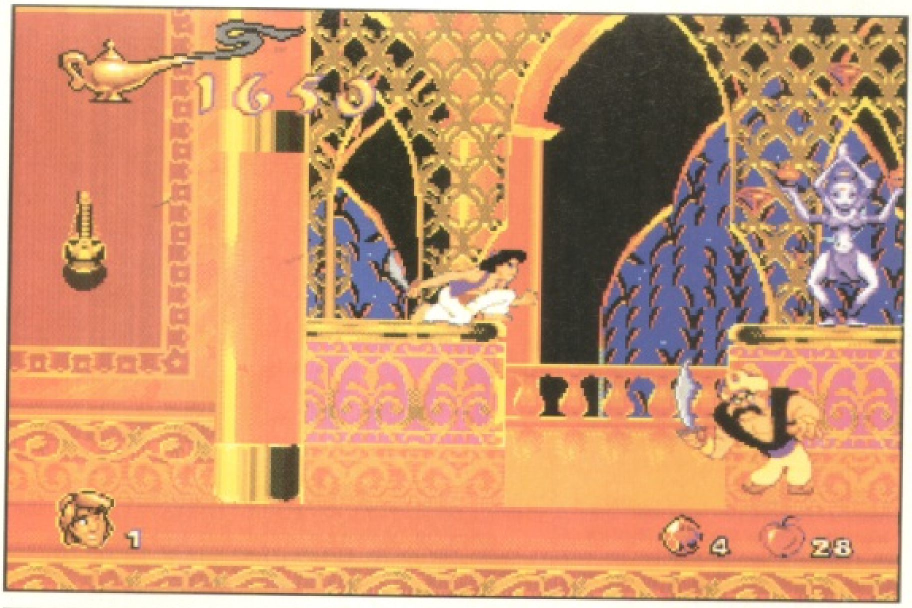
Come match day and the action is played out in front of your eyes via a selection of match 'highlights' which illustrate key moments from the game. These sequences — 45 minutes-worth in all — have been created by professional animators and apparently offer a realism unmatched by any other footy management game.

On The Ball will be released this August in two editions, one containing World Cup data and the other League data. Look out for the review next issue.

The Sim's Sons

Maxis will be no doubt be hoping to repeat the phenomenal success of SimCity 2000 with its next project Sim Rainforest, AKA Eden, which will allow players to control and regulate a complete rainforest ecosystem (as you might have guessed from the game's title).

Well, at least it's meant to be Maxis' next project — PC GAMES has heard rumours that Maxis are looking into the possibility of a 'building' simulator, provisionally entitled Sim Skyscraper, wherein players can construct their own houses, tower blocks and — yes! — skyscrapers, and then import them into SimCity 2000. Maxis is currently saying nothing on the subject, but even so we should have more info for you next time. And remember, you read it here first...



Virgin Take The **Mickey!**

Virgin Interactive Entertainment and Disney's successful partnership continues, with the announcement that VIE has negotiated the rights to produce a game based on Disney's forthcoming animated movie, The Lion King, for the PC and assorted other computer and console formats.

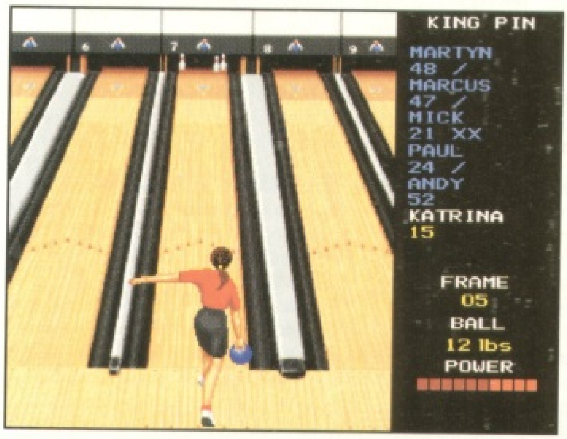
This news follows VIE's translations of other Disney movies, including The Jungle Book and Aladdin, the latter of which is coming to the PC at the end of the year. This will be a conversion of the beautifully-animated platform action game which appeared last Christmas on the consoles, where it was incredibly well-received. Given Virgin's superb execution of Cool Spot on the PC (see review on page 56), this is one platform game we're *really* looking forward to.

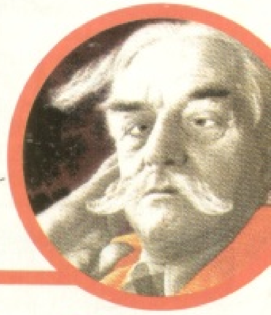
It's the **King!**

Prepare to do the sweaty-shoe shuffle with Team 17's King Pin, a simulation of the noble art of 10-pin bowling.

Allowing up to six players to compete against each other, King Pin will feature 3D rendered animations of the characters, aftertouch control system with adjustable power (ooh!), choice of bowling balls, digitised sound effects, full auto-scoring — in fact, just about everything you'd find down a real bowling alley, except those delicious cheesy chips they sell at the concession stands.

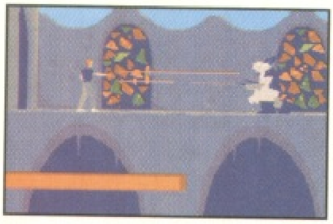
King Pin is due out in September, price £14.99.



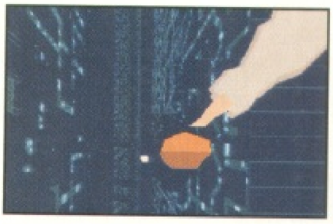


Sir Harvey Barrington presents: Classic Moments In Games

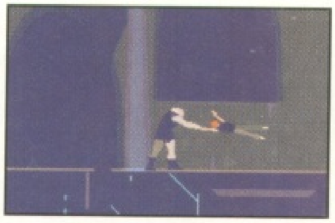
There was a truly monumental response to my request for Classic Moments In Games nominations last issue, and lucky Gary Taylor from Luton wins a free interactive software experience (that's a game, folks — Ed) for bringing this marvellous scene from Delphine's exquisite ANOTHER WORLD to my attention...



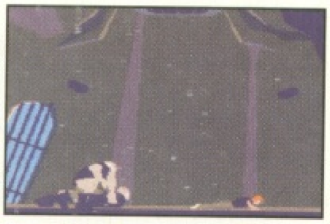
A classic adventure builds to a classic climax, as the hero Lester fights his way through alien warriors in his bid to escape imprisonment. Suddenly the walkway beneath his feet shatters and crumbles, plunging Lester into the abyss below...



All seems lost, until a giant hand reaches out and grabs Lester's flailing arm. It's Lester's noble comrade, a fellow captive who Lester helped earlier to escape the dark dungeons of his oppressive overlords. Or is it..?



In a brilliantly-realised plot twist, it transpires that Lester's rescuer isn't his friend at all, but an alien guard who simply wants the joy of killing Lester himself. Poor Lester stands no chance against the bulky guard and is savagely beaten...



None-too-soon Lester's alien friend arrives and tussles with the guard, giving Lester time to escape. As the battle rages behind him, Lester slowly crawls towards the lever that will bring him salvation. Will he make it in time..?

- If you have a Classic Moment you'd like Sir Harvey to analyse, write in to us at the usual PC GAMES address. If we use your suggestion, you'll receive a free game!

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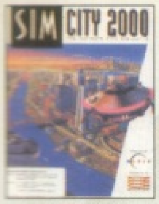

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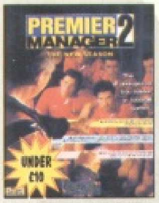

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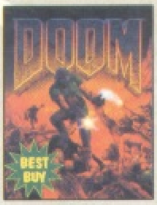

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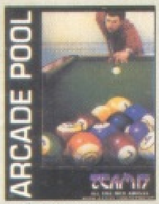

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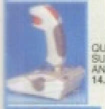

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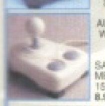

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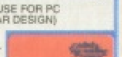

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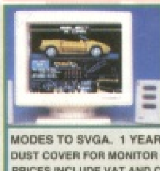

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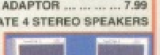

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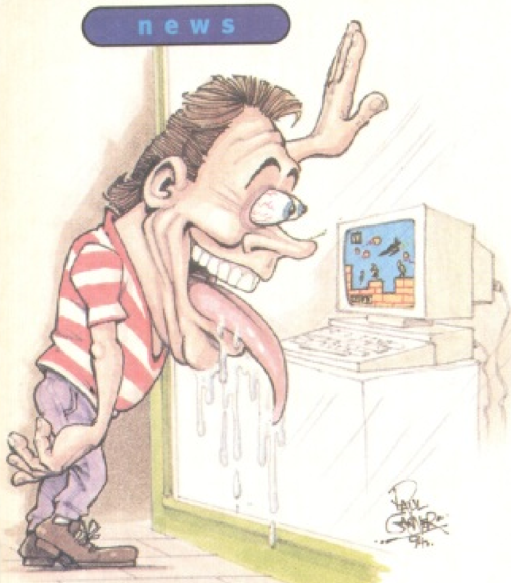


TRUE STORIES

No.2 The Missing Game Mystery

There was this chap, merrily wandering down the high street on a sunny Saturday afternoon. As he sauntered past his local electronics store, he caught sight of something in the window that made him stop and stare. It was a PC, running a rolling demo of the latest super-game.

This lad wasn't a computer buff — in fact, he'd never owned a computer, or played a computer game in his life — and he couldn't believe the quality of the images flickering across the PC's monitor screen. They were so... *real*, so... *lifelike*.

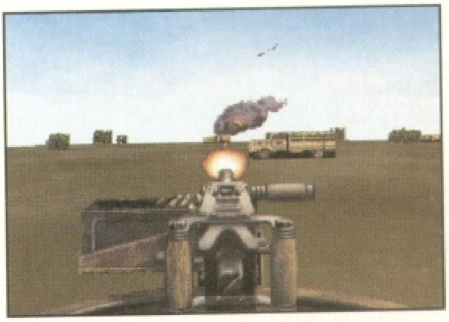
Right there and then, he knew he had to have this marvellous machine. He marched into the shop, pointed at the PC in the window, slapped his plastic on the counter, and within ten minutes this dream machine was his.

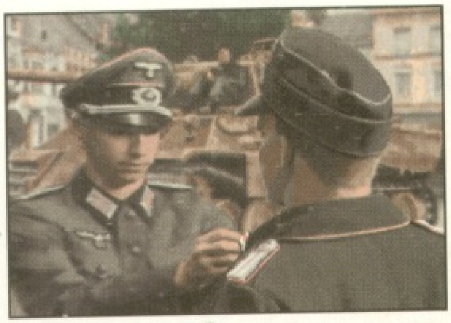
It was once he got home that his problems started. He set up the machine according to the manual, switched it on but couldn't understand why the game didn't appear. He tried *everything* but all to no avail. He re-read the manual, and then he read it again, and again, and again, but still no joy.

After a day of tinkering he finally admitted defeat and phoned the shop where he'd bought the machine. The problem was soon resolved. You see, he'd bought the PC — but hadn't realised you had to buy the game as well...

● Do you think this True Story is really true or a load of tosh? Send us your decision to: True Stories, PC GAMES, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. The first person to write in with the correct verdict will win a free piece of software.

Last issue's True Story, about the man who tried to cram a 5.25" floppy in a 3.5" drive, was TRUE! Yes, really. Ray Youngs from Crewe was the man who judged wisely, and wins a copy of MicroProse's excellent Fleet Defender for his efforts.





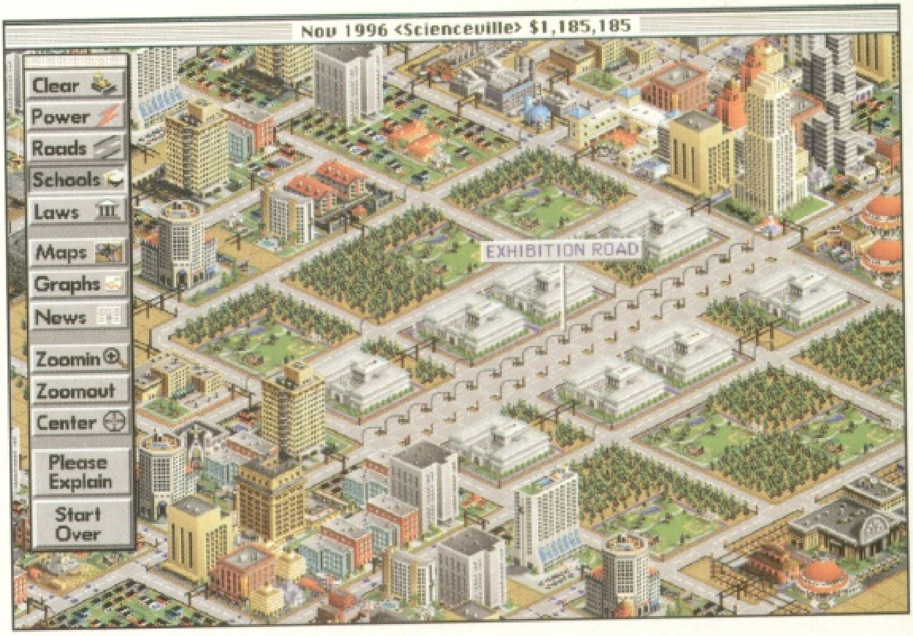
What's My Rhine?

Remember M1 Tank Platoon? You do? Well, Across The Rhine, a Gouraud-shaded, texture-mapped 3D tank warfare simulation currently in development at MicroProse, is a game that aims to blast the tracks and Chobham armour off it.

Due in mid-July, Across The Rhine recreates the epic struggle between the US Army and the German Wehrmacht. Starting with the D-Day landings, you must fight your way across the fields of France, blowing up Panzers, machine-gunning trucks and ruthlessly levelling small provincial towns and villages.

And the fun doesn't end there either. If you're successful, promotion up the ranks brings with it new levels of tactical and strategic command and before you know it you can be commanding sections, squads, platoons and even entire armoured divisions.

Stunning graphics, big guns and an involving strategic slant... It all sounds very exciting, that's for sure. Weather permitting and provided we have sufficient fuel, we should have a review of Across The Rhine for you in the next issue.



Sim Scienceville!

Museums — they're a bit boring, aren't they? Full of loads of old relics collecting dust — and that's just the staff.

Well, no more. Maxis has created a special cut-down version of its stunningly successful SimCity 2000 for use in the British Science Museum's City Limits? exhibition. It's called Scienceville, and has been designed to give visitors to the exhibition an insight into how complex running a city really is.

Featuring a simplified and enlarged toolbar so that the game can be played using either a mouse or a touchscreen, Scienceville offers players just seven minutes to make some limited yet crucial decisions about how 'their' city should be run.

At the end of the game, the player is presented with graphs and information showing them how their choices have affected Scienceville's future. What will you create? A barren, desolate wasteland or a healthy, thriving metropolis?

The City Limits? exhibition is running at the British Science Museum in Exhibition Road, London, from now until September — get down there now and show off your SimCity 2000 skills!

Strike **Two!**

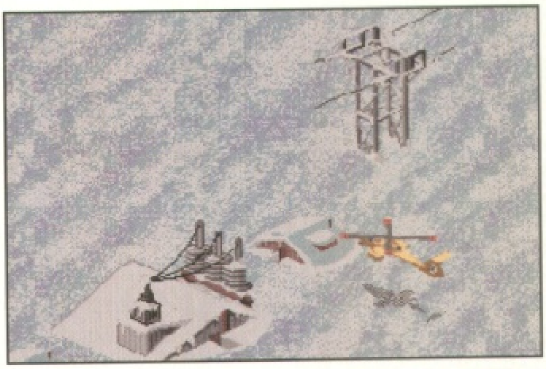
Jungle Strike, the sequel to Desert Strike (which was exclusively previewed in the last issue of PC GAMES), is currently is development for the PC.

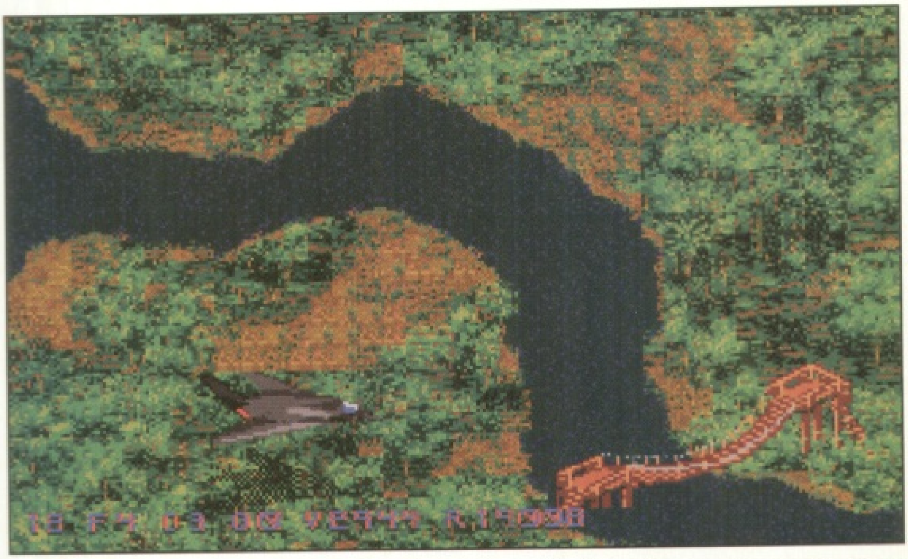
Originally published by Electronic Arts for the Megadrive console, Jungle Strike, like Desert Strike, is being brought to the PC by Sheffield-based software publisher Gremlin Graphics.

Using the same isometric-3D view as Desert Strike, Jungle Strike's main innovation is that it allows you to fly three vehicles in addition to the original's Comanche attack helicopter, namely an F-117A Stealth Fighter, an MX-9 Attack Hovercraft (apparently they do exist!) and an assault motorbike (and apparently these exist too!).

In addition, Jungle Strike is claimed to have more of a strategic element than its predecessor, with the player able to call up satellite maps to help plan his attack paths. It's also a much bigger game than Desert Strike, offering 30 action-packed missions spread over 8 campaigns.

Jungle Strike's release date is currently set for July. However, given that Desert Strike still hasn't appeared yet, that seems unlikely to us — expect something more like September or October, with a RRP of £34.99.





Windows **Wipeout!**

The fourth Windows incarnation, codenamed Chicago, is set for release in mid-Autumn this year. The new 32-bit combined operating system and graphical front-end should herald the end of DOS as we know it, and developer's kits for converting existing PC games to the new Chicago OS are being made available to software publishers.

Windows 4 promises to offer better performance while tackling multiple computer tasks simultaneously, no more incomprehensible DOS commands, no more base memory, extended memory and other complications — just a simple icon-driven PC at last. That's the PR blurb, anyway.

However, there are still questions concerning compatibility with existing games and hardware, while queries about the general stabilty of Windows 4 have yet to be answered. And, given some of the glitches in Windows 3.11 with CD-ROM games (i.e some of them don't work), this could potentially spell the biggest disaster in PC history.

Imagine if around 15,000,000 people were to upgrade like lemmings to the new version of their favourite interface only to find that Microsoft hadn't taken the games community into account when designing it. What if Doom doesn't work, TIE Fighter crashes and Inferno just goes blub-blub? What if every PC game pre-1994 that you have in your prized games cupboard was suddenly incompatible?

But it's early yet and Microsoft is assuring everybody who'll listen that Windows 4 will run smoother than a smooth-talking Stephen Fry recommending a popular bottled lager. We'll just have to wait and see, won't we?

WE WANT *YOU!*

We want you! We want you! We want you as a new recruit! Yes, we're on the hunt for two talented individuals to join the PC GAMES team!

STAFF WRITER

Have you ever dreamed of writing for Britain's best PC entertainment magazine? No? Well how about PC GAMES then? If you have a wide knowledge of the PC games market, and are capable of writing about it in a clear, concise yet entertaining way to strict deadlines, then we want to hear from you.

As well as being a bit nifty with the words like what we are, applicants should be lively, out-going, have a sense of humour that doesn't crack under pressure, live within commuting distance of Central London and be over 16 years of age.

If you think you've got what it takes, then write a 500-word review of a recent game in the PC GAMES style and send it, along with a covering letter explaining briefly why you think you're the right person for the job, to the Editor at the address given below. Best of luck!

DESIGNER

How do you fancy working under Dave Kelsall? Not a very attractive proposition, I know, but it's really not as bad as it sounds. We're looking for somebody to help Dave create the brightest, slickest, most exciting PC games magazine around, somebody who can bring creative flair to everything they touch.

Applicants should be familiar with Macintosh DTP systems, and be proficient with software packages such as Quark Xpress 3.2, Adobe Photoshop 2.5, Aldus Freehand 4.0 and Adobe Illustrator 5.0.

Interested? Then write in to the Editor at the address below, enclosing your CV, some examples of your work (preferably Mac-based) and a letter explaining briefly why you want the job and why you think you would be suitable for the position.

Send your applications, marked either STAFF WRITER or DESIGNER as relevant, to: David Upchurch, PC GAMES, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. In both cases, salaries will be negotiable according to age and experience.

FAX Ups!

We all make mistakes, no matter how big and clever we might think we are. Some are tragically serious — like The Charge Of The Light Brigade — and some are embarassingly trivial — like the way we had 'ú's instead of '£'s last issue (although the way some of you lot moaned on about it you'd have thought we'd killed somebody).

Even the high-tech world of computer games isn't free from errors. Donkey Kong would've been called Monkey Kong, but for a typo on a trans-continental telex. And, because of a similar foul-up in communications, the racing game Continental Circuits came to be known as Continental Circus!

Gosh! Just imagine what could've happened if there'd been similar 'mishaps' during the development of some of our favourite PC games...

PACIFIC TRIKE

An all-action biking sim which pits you and your trusty three-wheeler against the might of the Imperial Japanese Cycling Proficiency Test. Includes a unique 'stabilisers-on' training mode to help familiarise novices with the complexities of pushbike riding.

F-14 FEET DEFENDER

Guide your team of crack chiropodists to victory in this complex sim, which recreates the sights, the sounds and — yes! — the smells of the infamous Bay Of Bunions campaign. The texture-mapped, Gouraud-shaded 3D is truly breathtaking, permitting a variety of 'out-of-sock' views.

CANON FODDER

Henry VIII can't persuade the Church to grant him a divorce — and he's mad! Join the kooky king as he yomps through level after level of guns-blazin' action in his quest to rid the world of those 'turbulent priests'.

WIG COMMANDER

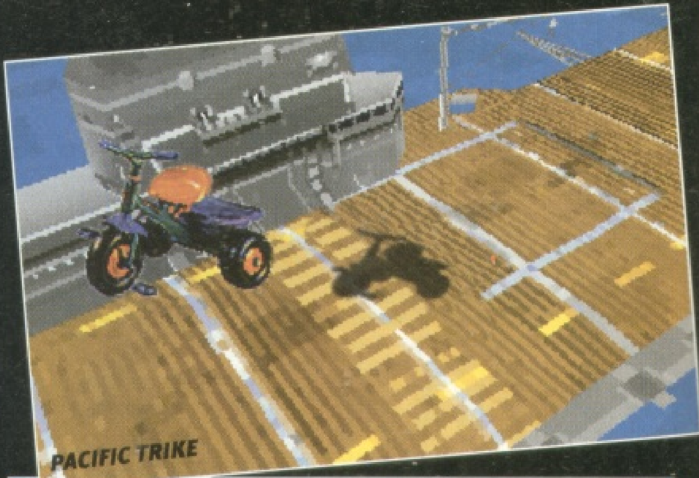
Balding aliens are invading the galaxy — and someone's going toupé! Can you save mankind from irreversible hair loss in this amazing space combat sim? Uses orchestral music and cinematic animated cut-scenes to help illustrate this tense story.

DESSERT STRIKE

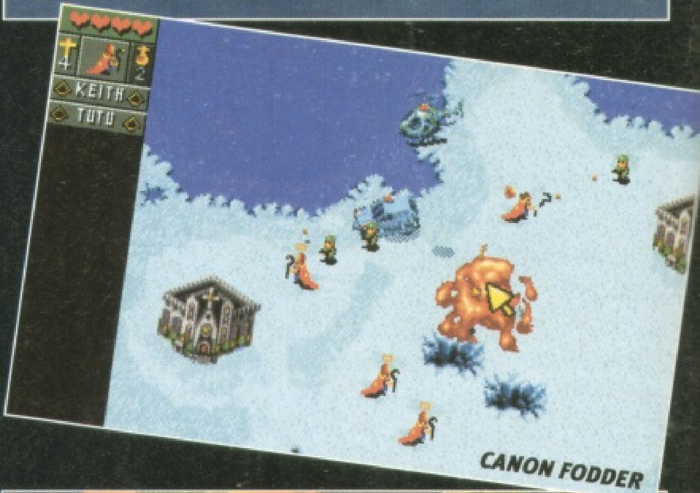
A mad Middle Eastern terrorist is planting assorted puddings and sweets in the Gulf, resulting in a major threat to World peace and the confectionery trade. In your Comanche attack blender, you must enter the war zone and put an end to his evil plans.

ARCHER MACLEAN'S POO

This stunning 3D sports simulation authentically recreates all the fun and excitement of the brown baize (That's enough 'Fax Ups!'... — Ed.)


PACIFIC TRIKE

F-14 FEET DEFENDER



CANON FODDER

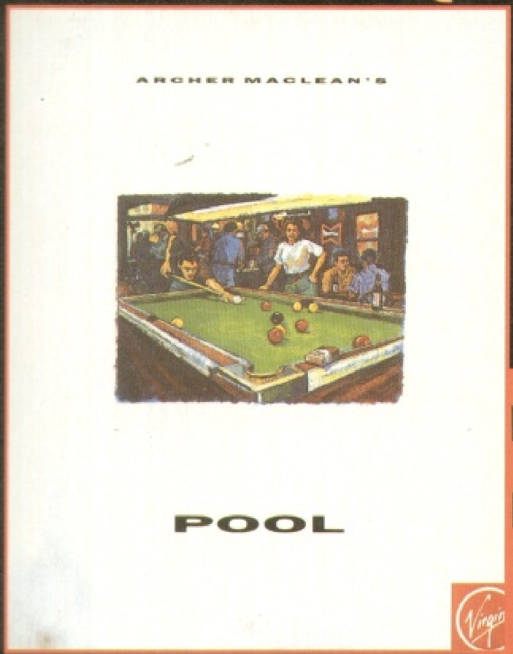
Drakhai: I will kill you, ape!

Weapon: Torpedo
Gun: Full Guns

WEAPON DISPLAY
KPS 200
SET 200
FUEL
WIG COMMANDER

DESSERT STRIKE

JOIN THE SQUAD... PLAY THE PC HITS



ARCHER MACLEAN'S DONE FOR POOL WHAT HE DID FOR SNOOKER.

Brought it balls, rules, baize and all to the home computer. Pool features three sets of rules: 8-Ball UK Coin-Op, and 8-Ball and 9-Ball US Pro.

You can practice or play a single match against a friend or one of 20 computer-controlled opponents. Or why not involve yourself in a tournament as one of eight players?

You can leave the cue and small change at home.

Archer Maclean's Pool is all you need.

"The definitive pool simulator."

"Very fast, very smooth, superb presentation."

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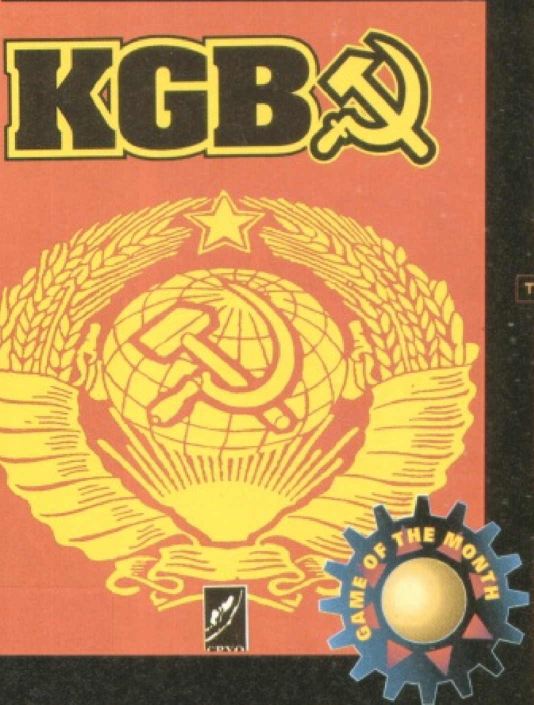

CHANGE THE COURSE OF HISTORY!

From a military post in the middle of Siberia, Comrade Rukov has been transferred to the KGB's recently-formed Department P - for reasons he doesn't need to know.

His brief: to investigate cases of corruption inside the KGB itself.

As Rukov begins to tug at the sordid fabric of Soviet political and criminal life, he exposes one terrible secret after another. How he faces the challenges ahead will determine his success: it could prove the difference between a new age of democracy......or a new reign of repression.

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The Passion
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"Fast, fast action... superb in every way."
- PC REVIEW

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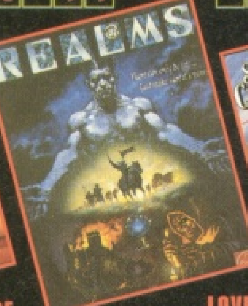

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Or put him to the sword? The choice is yours. Endowed with the divine right to rule, you inherit your father's Realm on his death. But the fragile peace has been shattered and war rages between the Realms. Now your brief reign has become a fight for survival. The neighbouring Realms are growing in strength at your expense. Do you build lines of supply to barter with them? Or build armies to battle with them?

"...the possibilities are endless." **- PC FORMAT**

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Can you hurl the javelin further than your opponents.....cycle faster.....run swifter......jump higher.....guide a kayak through a course and a horse through its paces? You'll be tested to the limit when you plunge into the excitement and fun of Summer Challenge, the most realistic multi-player sports simulation of its kind.

And you thought the games were over.

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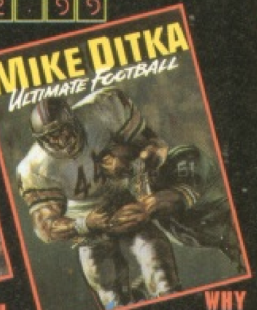

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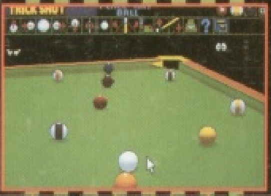
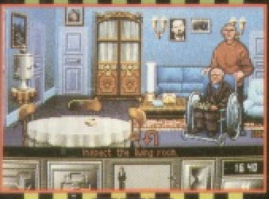
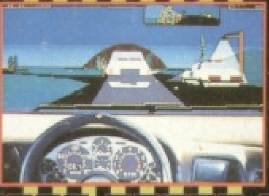


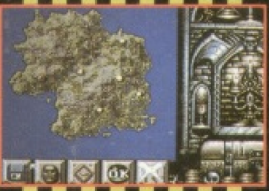
ARCHER MACLEANS POOL



KGB



TEST DRIVE 3



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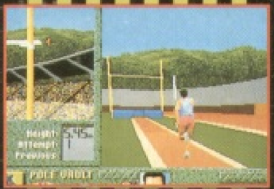
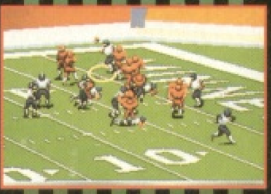


SUMMER CHALLENGE



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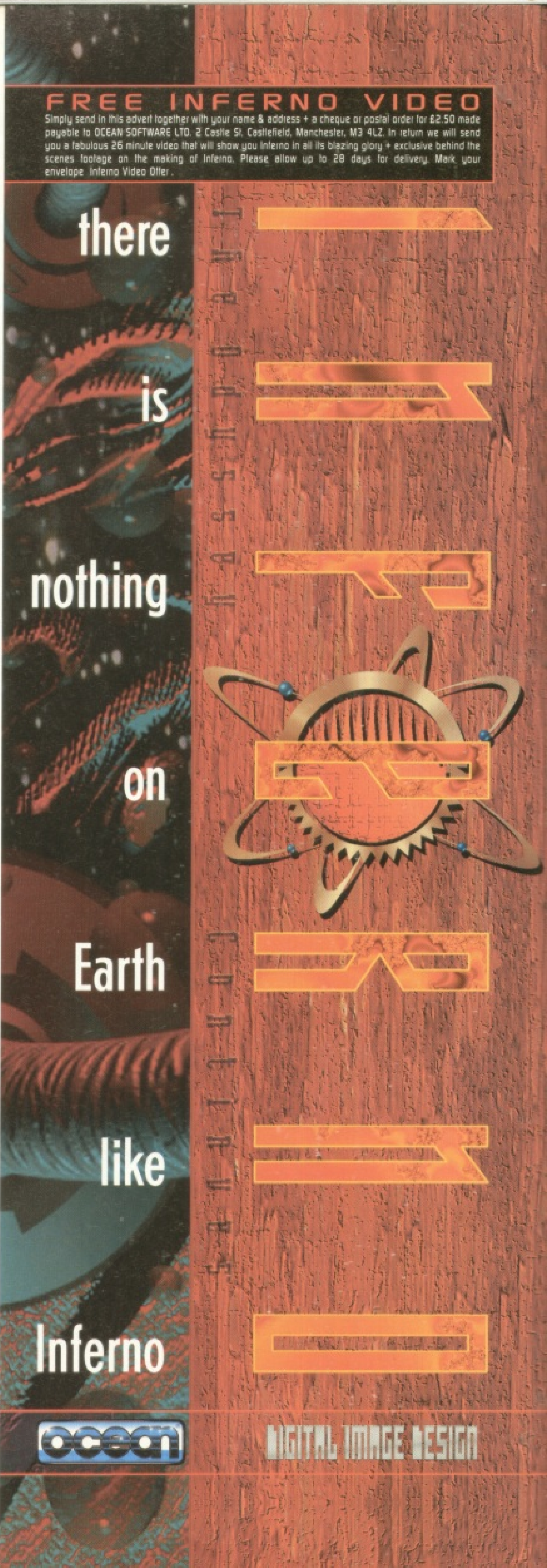

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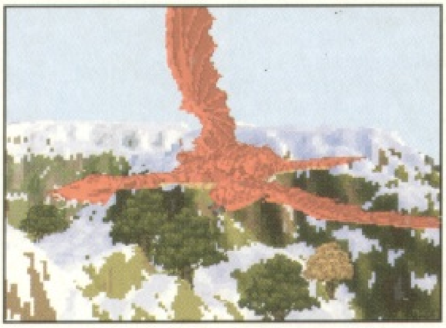
previews

Turn the page and you open the door to the future, a exciting realm of wonder where games will be bigger, better and brighter — or so the software companies' PR departments tell us. And we belive 'em, because we've been there. And we've got the photos to prove it, too...



SCAVENGER 4...22
Could this be the ultimate shoot-'em-up? Psygnosis set out to prove that anything LucasArts can do, they can do much, much better. David Upchurch rubs his chin and takes a peek at the game that makes Rebel Assault look very amateur...

PROJECT-X...24
A deserved smash on the Amiga, Team 17's Project-X is coming soon to a PC near you. But does the world need another horizontally-scrolling blast? Dean Evans has seen it, and he thinks the answer is an unqualified "Yes!"

WING ARMADA...26
After Wing Commanders 1 and 2, Origin strike back with a space armada that's got wings on it. Dean Evans takes a quick look and immediately nips down to Tottenham Court Road to buy a 20ft serial cable. And then there's Wing Commander 3...

CREATURE SHOCK...28
Virgin Interactive Entertainment looks set to raise the quality of CD games yet another notch with this visually stunning arcade adventure. And when Dean Evans stops drooling over it, maybe he'll tell you something about it...

NIEBLUNG'S RING...30
A RPG-style adventure based on... an *opera*? Well, it's an unusual idea, if nothing else. Maelstrom, creators of past classics such as Midwinter, prove to David Upchurch that it ain't over 'til the fat lady sings....

INFERNO..32
Fresh from the staggering success of TFX, DID prepare to unveil a game that looks like it could easily topple X-Wing from the top of the 3D space combat tree. Dean Evans jumps into the cockpit and takes it out for a test spin...

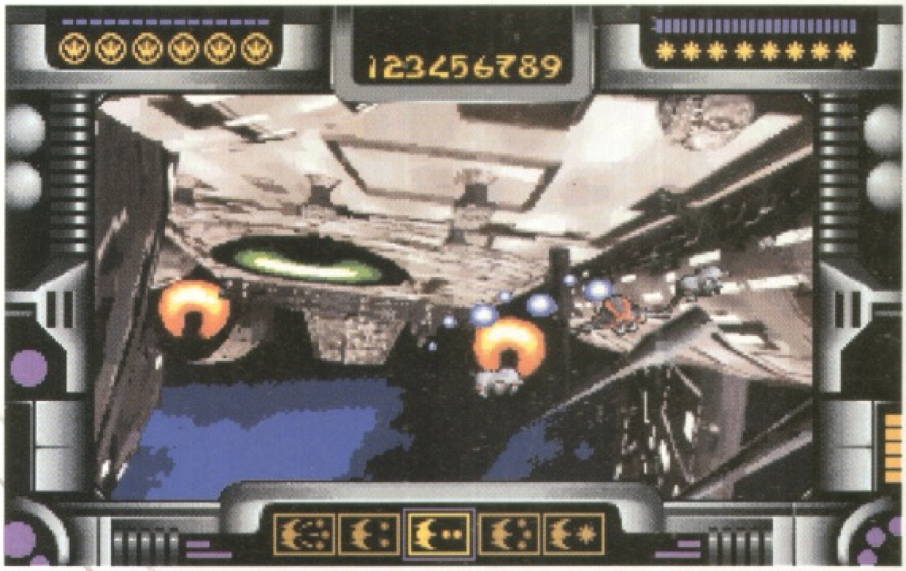
Picking over

David Upchurch boldly goes where no man has gone before — to Psygnosis's swanky new Chester offices, to preview a 3D shoot-'em-up that makes Rebel Assault look like a Spectrum game.

(Below) Here we see the Scavenger 4 skimming the underside of an alien warship during the climactic spacebattle. These sequences are not finished yet — when completed, you'll be able to see other ships dogfighting in the distance.

(Below right) One of Scavenger 4's end-of-level baddies — a mist-shrouded and weird-looking gun battery. These big boss monsters are pre-rendered like the animated 3D backdrops.

GAME	SCAVENGER 4
PUBLISHER	PSYGNOSIS
DEVELOPER	In-house
WORK *STARTED*	MARCH 1994
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	NOVEMBER 1994



Let's face it, Microcosm wasn't very good was it? Pretty, yes, but good, no. Limited, repetitive and not much of a challenge were just some of the criticisms aimed at it. Psygnosis, however, acknowledge that Microcosm had a few... *problems* and intend to correct them all with its next CD-based release, Scavenger 4.

Like Microcosm, it's essentially a 3D blast — but if Microcosm is the equivalent of Space Invaders on the shoot-'em-up evolutionary scale, then Scavenger 4 is R-Type. It builds on the strengths of its forefather, and adds loads of improvements and some very impressive bells and whistles.

For a start, Scavenger 4's scenario — which centres around an epic battle against implacable alien forces hell-bent on taking over the galaxy — is much stronger. Equipped with only a tiny one-man starfighter, it's the player's task to penetrate enemy lines and to locate and destroy the alien homeworld, liberating occupied planets along the way.

Okay, so it wins no prizes for originality, but because each game 'level' is set on a different alien-infested world there's a huge variety in both the baddies and the animated 3D backdrops, and the fact that you're working towards the alien empire's heart provides a neat explanation for the ever-increasing difficulty level.

Also, as you battle on, each freed world's inhabitants will join you in your struggle for peace, which culminates in a massive and incredibly spectacular spacebattle over the alien homeworld, much like the one at the end of Return Of The Jedi.

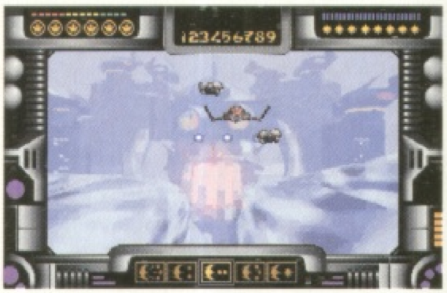
In fact, 'spectacular' is the key word to describe Scavenger 4. Because the backdrops are pre-rendered animation sequences pulled off CD, all sorts of fantastic special effects can be created, like plumes of lava spouting into the sky on the volcanic planet. And, as much as it pains me to say it, it makes LucasArts' Rebel Assault graphics look pretty shoddy...

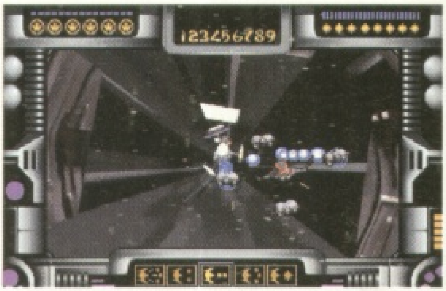
"Oh, we're way ahead of LucasArts!" state Scavenger 4's Chester-based development team. "We've been working on CD games for much longer than any other software company. The problems they're tackling now, we overcame years ago."

> "we're way ahead of LucasArts! the problems they're tackling now, we overcame years ago."
>
> Scavenger 4's development team.

And, as any software developer will tell you, the big problem with CD is that a single-speed drive can only access 150 kilobytes of data per second. Given that a single VGA screen is roughly 64 kilobytes big, creating smooth, fluid animations that update at an acceptable speed requires some nifty data decompression. The Scavenger 4 team have lost count of the number of revisions they've made to their decompression routines: "The only way you get better is by drawing on what you've learnt from a previous routine and then rewriting it all over again," they claim.

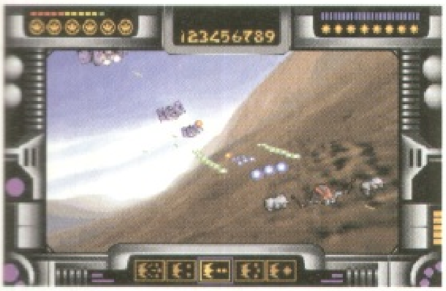
Unlike Rebel Assault you can't 'branch off' from the main flight path, and go off exploring some interesting-looking side canyon or valley. This was a conscious decision on the team's part — branches mean you have to use up CD space to create alternative pathways, which would reduce the overall graphical variety. And, as the team point out, "you don't normally have branching points in shoot-'em-ups anyway — they always tend to be quite linear."

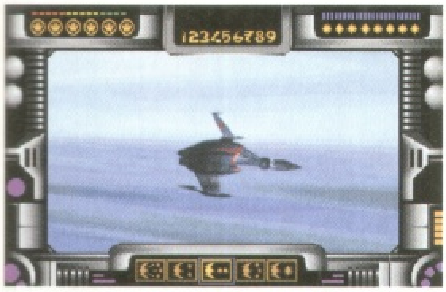




The player's ship blasts down a narrow tunnel on its way to a confrontation with the alien empire's mothership. Be warned — crashing into the tunnel's sidewalls can be deadly!

the Bones

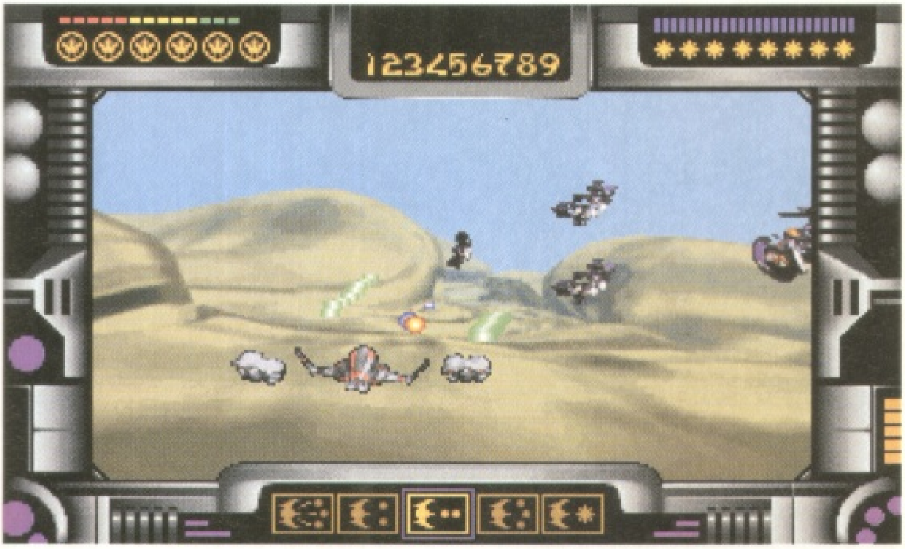




(Top) The barren-looking desert world is one of the few levels of the game fully 'up and running' at the moment. Note the detail and definition in the 3D backdrops, and compare them to Rebel Assault's pixellated, blocky images.

(Above) One of the animated cutscenes that link the game's various stages and levels. These are being improved for the PC to make them more exciting and dynamic.

(Below) All the alien sprites were rendered in a 3D modelling package, which helps ensure they blend in with the rendered backdrops. Note that the Scavenger 4 ship has two wingmen — just one example of the game's many power-ups.



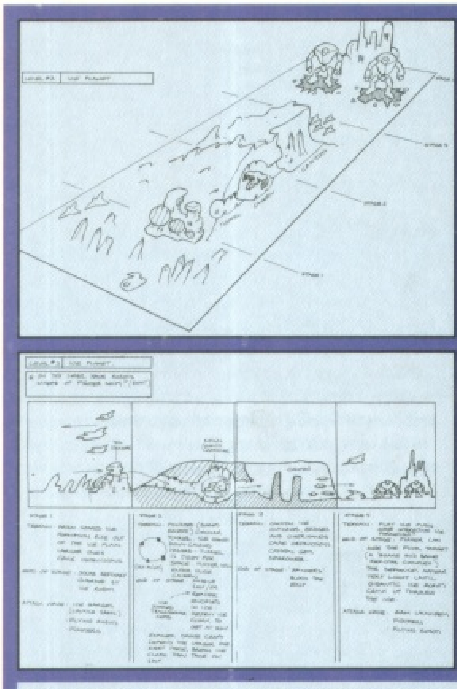
The drawback with such impressive backdrops is they can end up being just that — backdrops, with little or no feeling that they've got anything to do with the sprites overlaid on top of them. In Cryo's MegaRace, for example, the player's car and those of his opponents just seem to be floating on top of their surroundings.

Scavenger 4's development team has worked hard to avoid this, making sure the sprites blend in with their surroundings. The feeling of 'being there' is further enhanced by the fact that the player can collide with objects in the backdrops, as can the aliens. "As you're flying along you might see a ship crash into the landscape in the distance," says the team, "or flying under a bridge some of the aliens might crash into the bridge supports.

Even Scavenger 4's end-of-level boss monsters have had the Psygnosis treatment. These, like the backdrops, are pre-rendered animations and, in keeping with shoot-'em-up tradition, each has a weak spot that has to be discovered and pummelled with laser fire. The neat thing here is that each boss goes through various stages of 'evolution' as you weaken it, maybe altering its mode of attack or even its appearance, so you can never get *too* complacent.

As with Microcosm, Scavenger 4 was originally developed for the FM Towns, a Japanese computer, where it was reasonably well received. For the PC the game has been radically enhanced in just about every department. "We only had five months to develop the FM Towns version," explain the team, "and there was a lot of stuff we didn't have time to put in."

Graphically the game is much improved — the cutscenes between levels have been reworked to make them more dynamic and exciting and many of the level graphics have been re-rendered. Unfortunately, though, the number of colours in the PC backdrops has had to be reduced from the Towns' 256 down to 64.



Before the artists set to work rendering the 3D backdrops, the layout for each was planned out roughly on paper from both a side and a pseudo-3D perspective.

You see, on the Towns the game's sprites are drawn by special graphic chips, which allows them to have a separate palette to the main screen. On the PC, however, the sprites are drawn by the game's software, so a portion of the main screen's palette has to be reserved for them. It has to be said, however, that I personally couldn't notice any difference.

Apart from graphics, there have also been some major improvements to the gameplay, most noticeably as regards the 'power-ups'. In the Towns game, extra weapon icons floated on-screen at pre-determined points and you could only have one power-up on the go at any one time.

On the PC the system is very different, and will be familiar to fans of old coin-ops like Nemesis. All the possible power-ups are shown on a menu bar at the bottom of the screen. By destroying waves of aliens you earn tokens, which move a highlighted box along the menu bar. When the box reaches the power-up you want, you press a key to select it.

This system gives the player much more control over how he tools up his ship and also provides much more of a sense of achievement. In addition, each weapon has several 'upgrade levels' and more than one can be carried at a time.

Packed with action, Scavenger 4 should go down a storm when it's released towards the end of the year. One things for sure — it won't be just another Microcosm.

Parallax scrolling? Power-ups? What on Earth are you talking about? Dean Evans settles down for the fastest half-an-hour of his life as he takes a look at Team 17's Project-X.

Stand by

GAME	PROJECT-X
PUBLISHER	TEAM 17
DEVELOPER	EAST POINT
WORK *STARTED*	MAY 1994
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	JULY 1994

The PC isn't exactly well-endowed in the shoot-'em-up department, is it? We've had Xenon 2 from the Bitmap Brothers, Raptor from Apogee and... er... that's really been about it. The PC has experienced a shoot-'em-up drought. While other machines have endured a tidal wave of R-Types and Galaxians, the PC has remained this big, complicated lump of beige metal that you just play RPGs, flight sims and adventures on.

But next month Team 17 aims to change all that with the release of its highly-acclaimed arcade blast, Project-X; six huge levels of sideways scrolling shoot-'em-up action with the player attempting to guide his fragile spacecraft through the hostile environment of the robot planet, Ryxx.

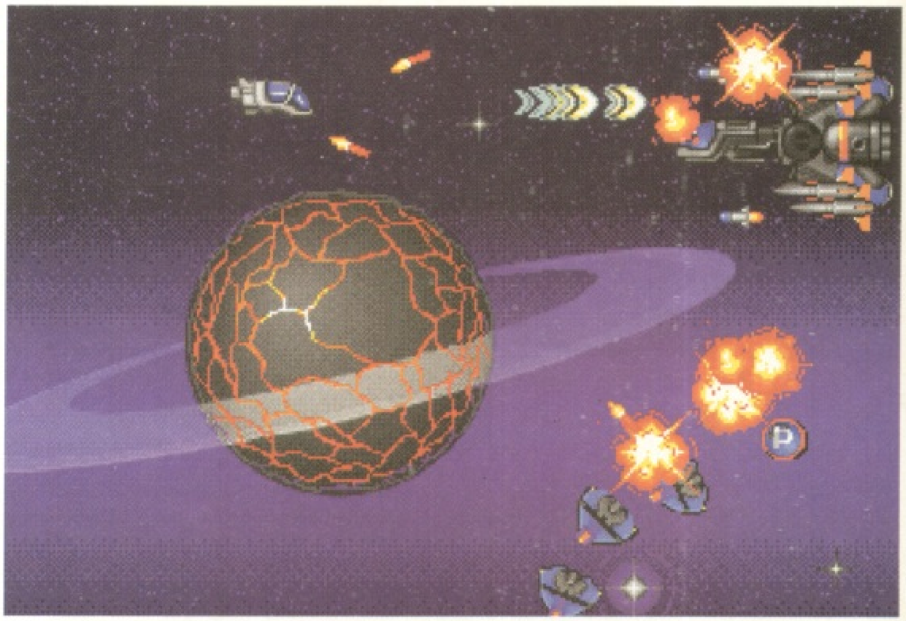
The plot goes something like this. After some rather unsuccessful bio-mechanical experimentation by the civilised worlds, the by-products — hundreds of mutated insect-like droids — have been dumped on the small, barren planet of Ryxx to rot and quietly degenerate.

But, against all expectations, the droids survive and flourish and before they can escape into space, you have been chosen to fly into the heart of the planet, dodge the defences, blast the droids and drop a missile down a suitably strategic pipe to blow the whole thing sky high.

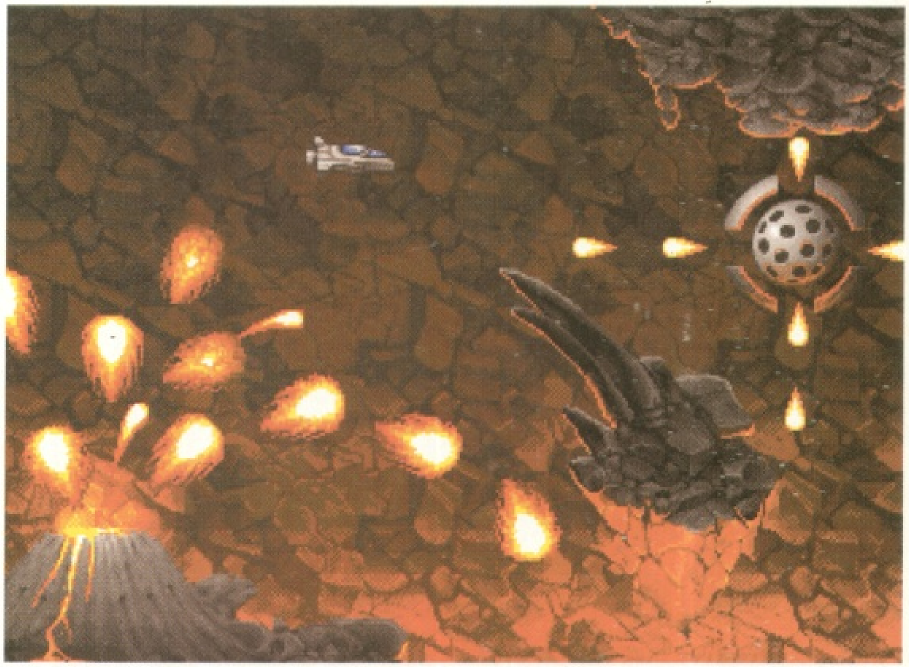
Imagine it. A lone spaceship, packed with lots of big, earth-scorching weaponry, screaming through dark caverns, dodging stalactites and picking off spinny cylinder ships of doom... Okay, even I have to admit that despite my impressive build up it still sounds like a typical shoot-'em-up, but Project-X *is* different.

Project-X is a fast and furious game certainly, but it's got a little bit of style too. The graphics are wonderfully detailed including colourful background landscapes and a huge variety of alien, mechanoid-type bad guys. You'll pilot your tiny ship across the cold vaccuum of space, over snow-capped mountain peaks and through flooded tunnels and, having seen Project-X in action, you'll probably be overwhelmed by metallic spheroid things and blasted to bits by a big missile-firing fish when you get there.

The aliens in Project-X are far from dumb. Usually in shoot-'em-ups the alien hordes will come swirling towards you, lost in their own private attack formations, and all you have to do is hang back at the bottom of the screen and pump the fire button like a maniac. In Project-X it's not that simple. The bad guys are cunning and intelligent, varying both in design and in the way they attack. That's the good thing about this game. You can never relax. You never really know what's going to happen next.



(Above) Look at the weapons on that! Each bolt-on extra can be beefed up to varying levels of destructiveness by repeatedly selecting the same 'power-up' icon.



(Above) Before each game the player can choose which spacecraft he wants to fly. There are three on offer: the first is bulky and slow-moving but powerful, the second is nimble but has feeble weapons, while the third is an average of the other two. (Right) Project-X boasts screen after screen after screen of gorgeous smooth-scrolling backgrounds, many of which have animated 'features' — like the beautiful waterfall which you can just see to the bottom-left of this screen.

y for Action!

As the game progresses, things understandably begin to get a little tough and phrases like "suicide run" and "impossible odds" suddenly spring to mind. There is hope however, because as you shoot the aliens you can pick up power-up 'tokens' which, when you have amassed enough, give you the opportunity to bolt even better super-megadeath weapons onto your spaceship.

"Your ship has multiple weapons systems that can be enhanced and upgraded by picking up these tokens," explains Marcus Dyson, Team 17's project coordinator. "You have a weapons bar at the bottom of the screen with things like Speed Up, Side Shots, Homing Missiles... lots of stuff all the way up to Stealth which gives you a short period of invincibility."

"Every time you pick up a token you are entitled to a speed-up and, when you've collected enough, the weapons bar will indicate that a different weapon is available. Of course, you don't have to take it there and then. You can risk everything by waiting, building up your tokens and then buying a really big Magma gun or something. It's all automatic. There's no Spaceships 'R' Us shops between levels."

Whatever weapons you strap onto your nimble space fighter, they're not going to do you much good if you can't dodge and weave around like a fly evading a housewive with a fly swatter. The action is fast and unrelenting and, if you're lucky enough to actually complete a level (and it's damned tough, let me tell you), you get the unenviable chance to race at ludicrously fast speeds through a series of tight, twisty tunnels — it's a bit like the tunnel bit in the old coin-op Scramble, remember?

Unsurprisingly, Amiga specialists Team 17 have contracted the conversion of Project-X out to small Lowestoft-based software house, East Point, and producing a PC shoot-'em-up has not been without its headaches. If there's one thing the PC isn't any good at, it's shifting sprites around the screen quickly and in big numbers. Mark Stamps from East Point explains.

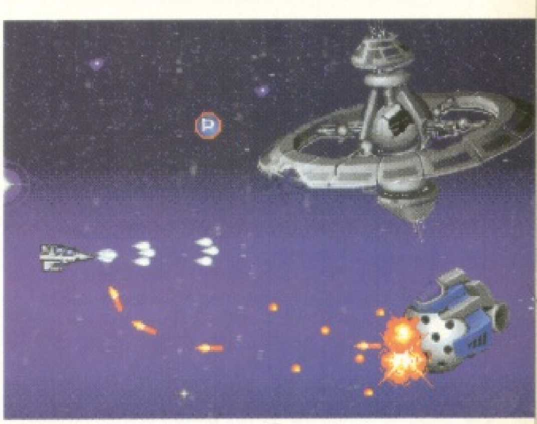
"In the game you can have up to 16 aliens flying around, plus your ship and things exploding. Some levels even have a background starfield scroll as well. It looks really sexy."

"Doing the graphics has been the biggest problem because, as the game is running at the 320 x 240 pixel screen resolution, there's a lot less memory space left in the video card than you usually have — simply because there's a huge amount of sprites on the screen at once. Drawing them isn't a problem, but refreshing the backgrounds and rebuilding the screen afterwards definitely is. The PC isn't built for it, and we've had to employ some fancy new coding techniques to refresh the scroll rate."

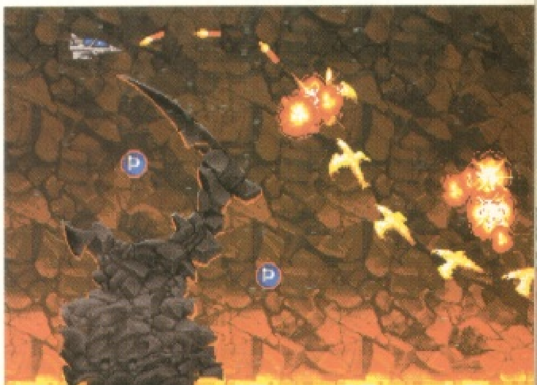
But despite the hardware problems, East Point is confident that Project-X PC will look and play every bit as good as the Amiga original. Mark has been working on the game for just over a month, mostly on his own, and while a month may not seem like a long time, a hell of a lot of work has already been put in.

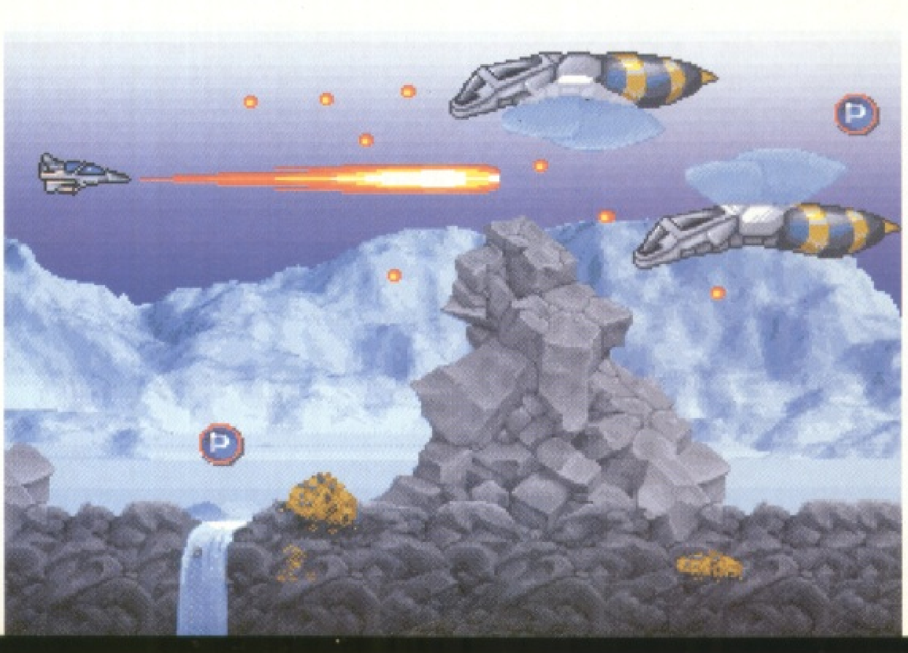
"Project-X on PC has had a lot of new stuff written for it," says Mark. "We've had to develop things like a new sprite system and a new scroll engine, and what we're doing now is putting together a library of essential stuff that allows us to quickly create scrolling engines, move blocks and animate front-ends. It's not a high-level coding language, but a collection of routines that all support each other."

And there's no denying that Project-X *looks* extremely impressive, and if the sound is half as good as the original, with a thumping stereo soundtrack and digitised speech, it could turn out to be superb.



(Above and below) In the game's earlier — and easier — stages, it's best to power-up your homing missiles as quickly as possible. You can then leave them to seek & destroy enemy targets while you concentrate on dodging incoming fire.





"Project-X on the PC will have exactly the same sound as the Amiga version," Mark assures me. "However, at the moment the four channel sound only works with a Gravis Ultrasound because that's the one that happens to be sitting inside my machine. But it will eventually work with all major soundcards."

So after Body Blows, Silverball and the immensely disappointing Alien Breed, with the release of Project-X, Team 17 looks like it might finally make its mark in the PC games market. The company has big plans for PC development, including a conversion of the awesome Alien Breed 2 which, coincidentally, will also be handled by East Point.

"We'll be starting work on it as soon as we've finished with Project-X," says Mark excitedly. "It will be the same as the CD32 version in that it will be the original Amiga game plus an extra 40 missions. It's huge."

Hey, put me down for a slice of that one as well, will ya?

Armada Here!

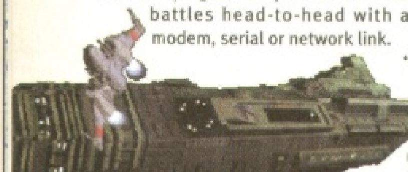
Battlestar Galactica meets Star Wars as the cats and the square-jawed monkey-men return in Origin's Wing Armada. Inspired spin-off or Wing Commander cash-in? Dean Evans takes a look...

GAME	WING ARMADA
PUBLISHER	ELECTRONIC ARTS
DEVELOPER	ORIGIN SYSTEMS.
WORK *STARTED*	SEPTEMBER 1993
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	JULY 1994

Although this time around Origin hasn't quite made us gasp "Cor! Blimey! Wow!" with its much vaunted World War Two sim Pacific Strike, the future looks much brighter, with games like BioForge, System Shock, Wings Of Glory and Wing Armada wedged firmly in the creative pipeline. If nothing else, the Texas-based company is proving itself to be nothing short of prolific.

The last of these, Wing Armada, is based loosely on the Wing Commander 2 game engine, and is the latest installment in the hugely successful Wing Commander series. Like the disappointing Wing Commander Academy before it, Wing Armada is essentially a mission construction kit, but any similarity between the two ends there. This time Origin has listened closely to the criticisms levelled at the first game (i.e. people wanted to fly head-to-head and wanted to link missions together to form campaigns) and has incorporated the feedback into its shiny, brand-spanking new game, Wing Armada.

So in Wing Commander Armada not only do you have the option of constructing your own dogfights and campaigns, but you can also wage intergalactic battles head-to-head with a friend over a modem, serial or network link.



"Wing Armada is the first in a line of multi-player products from us," says Origin. "There's a split-screen view that allows two players to compete on the same computer. And for the first time in a Wing Commander game, a player can switch sides and fly for the evil Kilrathi Empire."

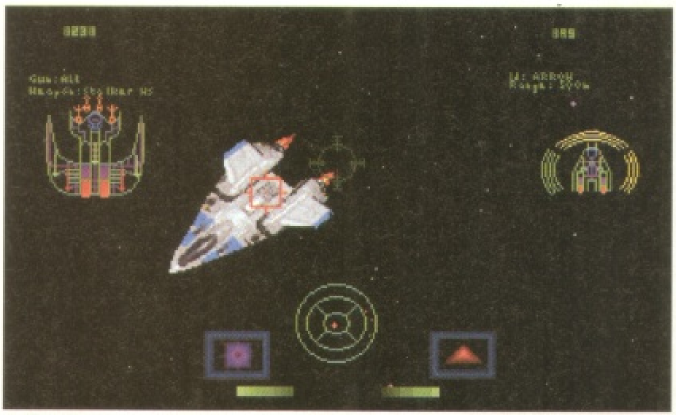
It seems that after years of blindly following orders in Wing Commanders 1 and 2, losing ships and friends along the way, you are now commander of the fleet, responsible for coordinating a momentous and crushing strike against the Empire of Kilrah or, if you choose to fight for the furballs, an attack against the heart of the Confederation itself.

You're no longer just a hotshot pilot fulfilling an A to B to C assignment because the new war requires some serious tactical thinking. You must decide where to fight, how to fight and what ships to use to get the job done. In Wing Armada you can customise both your universe and your fleet, choosing to pilot any one of ten ships and to explore, mine and trade with over 2,000 planets.

"In Wing Armada you have the freedom to construct your own missions and your own campaign," enthuses Origin. "For the first time, you can merge your space combat abilities with strategic responsibility. From quadrant maps and information from recon ships, you plan an expansion of your fleet and manage critical resources. At the end of each decision lies a battle, and you lead the Wing. You also choose the intricacy of combat, from short dogfights to extended campaigns across an infinite universe."

Thankfully, Wing Armada promises to be more than just Privateer with bells on. It features three levels of gameplay — intense dogfight scenarios, strategic search & destroy battles or extended campaigns to destroy the enemy homeworld. Origin, it seems, has not rested on its Wing Commander laurels but tweaked and refined the game engine to keep up with changing technology and demands of the gamesplayers.

"Wing Armada utilizes a next generation 3D engine complete with fully textured, light-source shaded objects," says Origin. "Some of the new features include an invisible cockpit that gives the player a larger viewing area, actual 3D shields that protect your ship from the inevitable onslaught, an intuitive 'Starmap' navigation/deployment interface and a 'Tauntmaker' option in which you can customize digital taunts to use against the enemy."



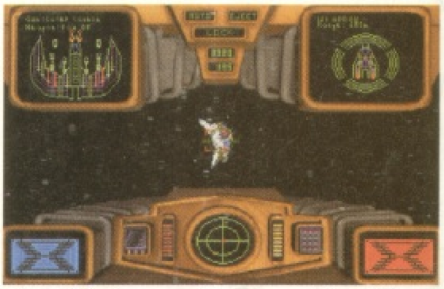
Unlike Wing Commander Academy, Wing Armada uses an enhanced version of Origin's 3D game engine and, like Pacific Strike, you can also dispense with the view-limiting cockpit.

Yes, if you've got a soundcard with an internal recording program and a microphone, you can actually record and play back your very own insults to use in the heat of battle. Imagine playing against a friend and sending personalised abuse across the space lanes — "Come back and fight you stupid bas..."

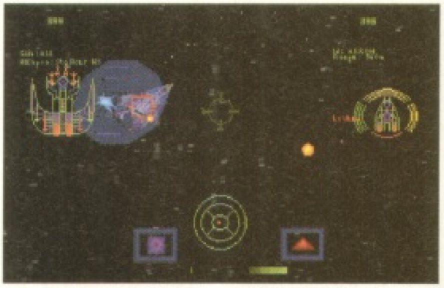
Anyway, we should have a review of Wing Armada in the next issue and, although the game is undoubtedly a filler product until the release of Wing Commander 3, a multi-player, campaign construction kit sounds brilliant to me. I just hope that this time Origin has got it right.

As for Wing 3, it's due to appear towards the end of the year and apparently (don't tell anyone) it features high-resolution Super VGA graphics, stunning Silocn Graphics rendered backdrops and full-motion, full-screen video footage of high-power motion picture talent including Mark 'Star Wars' Hamill, John 'Raiders Of The Lost Ark 'Rhys-Davies and Malcolm 'A Clockwork Orange' McDowell.

Cor. Blimey. Wow. More news soon.

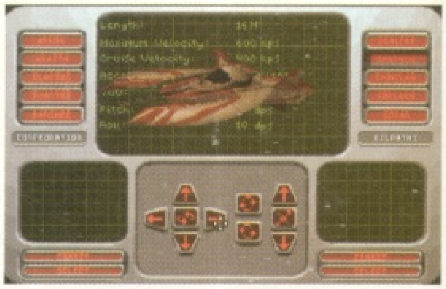


With missiles, lasers, mass driver cannons and particle beam thingies, combat in Wing Armada promises to be frantic.

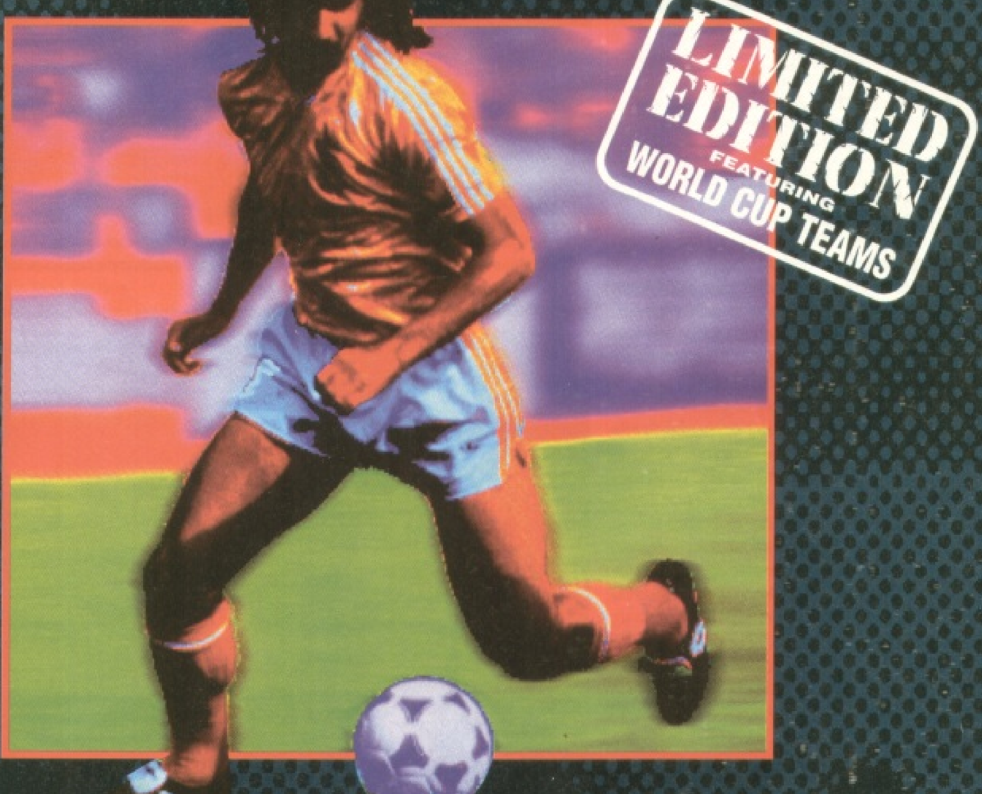


(Above) New features include 3D shields, a comprehensive campaign option and the all-important multi-player mode.

(Below) Fly 10 spaceships, including secret Kilrathi fighters.



INTERNATIONAL Sensible SOCCER



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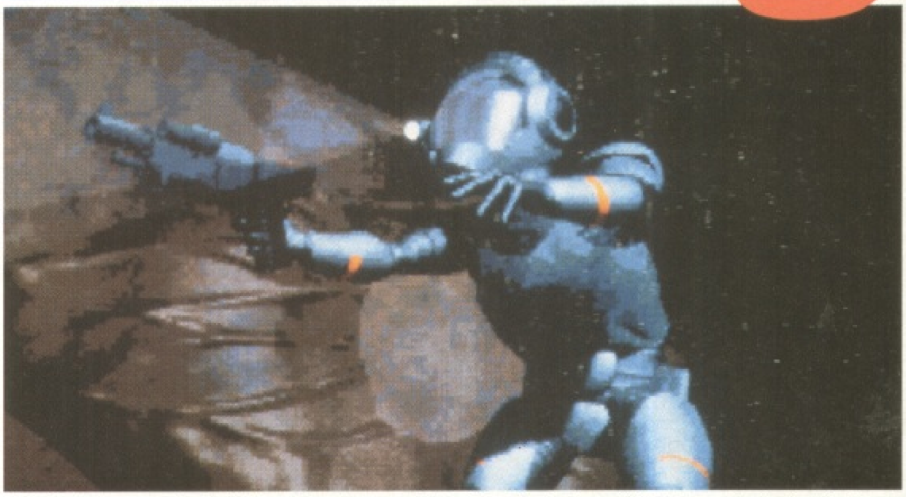
Shocking

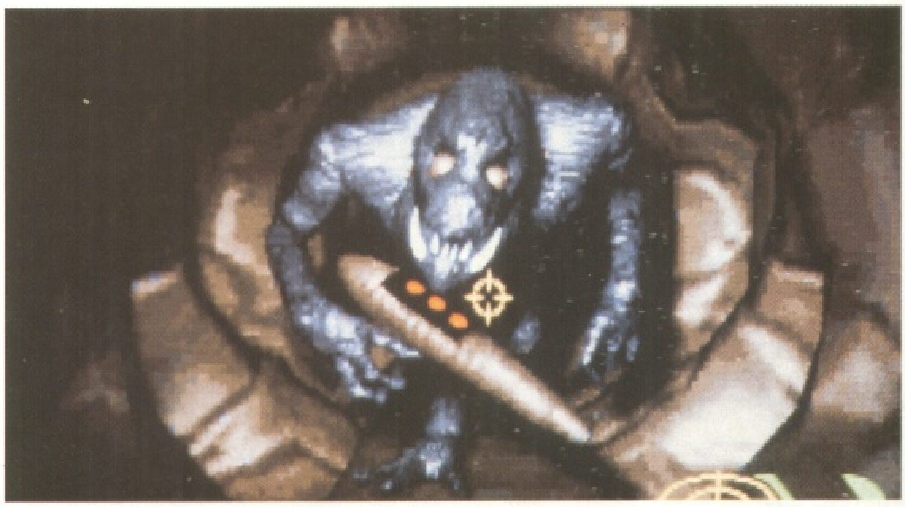
A CD game with some gameplay, huh? Dean Evans takes the biggest gun he can find and creeps through the slime-drenched tunnels of Colindale in search of Argonaut's Creature Shock.

GAME	CREATURE SHOCK
PUBLISHER	VIRGIN INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT
DEVELOPER	ARGONAUT
WORK *STARTED*	OCTOBER 1992
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	NOVEMBER 1994



(Above) Was that something behind you? Nope, guess not. Tentacle-toasting is a tense affair in Argonaut's Creature Shock and Argonaut has gone to great lengths to introduce some Hitchcock-style suspense into the game.

(Below) Alien culling is a simple matter of lining up the weapons crosshair and then pounding the mouse button like a maniac.



Take the Northern Line to Colindale, turn right out of the station and walk half a mile down the road and you'll come to the home of Argonaut Software, the company behind ATAC, Birds of Prey and that Super FX chip thingie that made Starwing so good on the Super NES.

But Argonaut has also been busy on the PC and the game everybody has been dribbling enthusiastically over recently is Creature Shock, a CD-based, first-person perspective shoot-'em-up featuring 3D Studio rendered graphics, big guns, lots of alien nasties and over an hour of full-screen, full-motion video.

If you look at the screenshots on these pages, Creature Shock certainly looks pretty mouth-watering... but does Argonaut really have a playable CD game on its hands or is Creature Shock just a basic shoot-'em-up with fancy graphics?

"It's probably a bit of both," suggests Neil Jackson, Creature Shock's producer. "What we're trying to do is create an interactive, movie-like experience, with all the elements of a shoot-'em-up. Okay, it's probably not going to melt your monitor or set your keyboard on fire, but after a diet of encyclopaedias, Photo CD collections and compilations of old disk games, we wanted to do something different. We wanted to utilise the massive amounts of data storage available on CD and create a bold, brassy and dramatic movie."

Creature Shock is set in the year 2023 and, like BladeRunner and the Alien movie series, the game paints a bleak, dark picture of our little blue-'n'-green planet. Earth's population has reached a crisis level; famine, disease and environmental destruction are widespread and the prospect of war inches closer as people clash over land rights, food and water.

But us humans, we're a resourceful lot, and instead of sitting down around the big UN table and trying to sort out our problems, we instead spend billions of dollars on a 2001-style survey ship, the SS Amazon, and blast it out into the solar system to find a suitable place for the middle classes to escape to.

Initially things run very smoothly, but as the survey ship slips slowly by one of Saturn's smaller moons, all contact with it is suddenly lost. As a member of a crack UN commando team, you are dispatched to the SS Amazon to (a) find out exactly what's going on and, when you discover that it's alien invaders which are causing all the fuss, (b) shoot everything and anything in a fast, fully-rendered, compressed-video type of way.

"Creature Shock is an interactive 3D adventure," explains Neil. "There are three very large sections where you get to wander around in very dark, very enclosed spaces and your objective is simply to remain alive. As you progress through the game you randomly encounter 3D apparitions and can choose to fight them or run away."

In fact, Creature Shock features two different styles of gameplay. In addition to the levels where you walk around toasting anything that has a tentacle, Creature Shock also has three 3D flying sections, where you must battle against Manta Ray starfighters and Starfish Mine Launchers to get to a new location.

"The flying sequences are a bit like those in Rebel Assault," says Neil, "but there's much more going on. You've got to dodge objects, shoot alien spaceships, pick up objects, collect power-ups and you can even dive down into canyons. All the flying stuff is generated by a polygon engine and then texture mapped. All the sequences are different too. One is set in space, one is over land and the last one is somewhere peculiar that I can't tell you about."

Structurally, the game is mission-based and you must successfully complete each mission before you are allowed to move onto the next. Firstly you must

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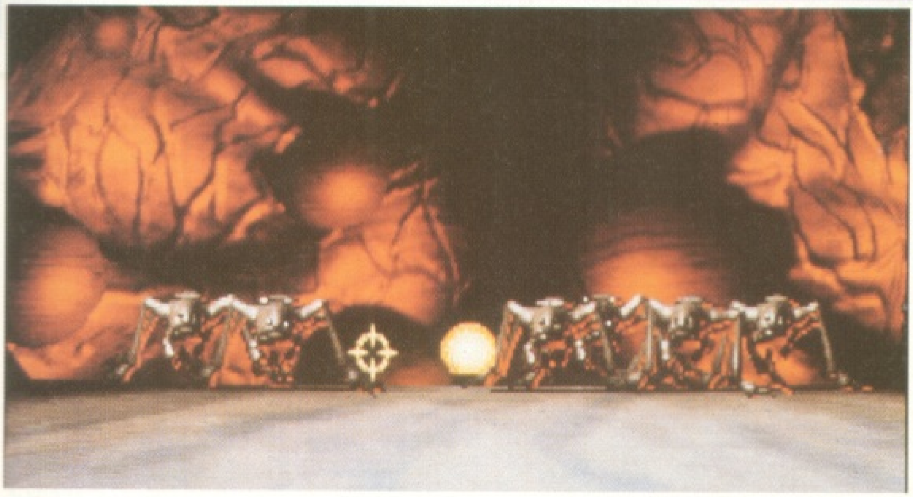


must visit the extraterrestrial probe and obtain an alien specimen for scientific study. In the next section you must cut the data link between a relay station on one of Saturn's moons and the alien starship and finally, 500Mb of code later, you must make your way into the heart of the alien starship itself to seek out and destroy the invaders.

"The deeper you go, the more nasty the monsters become," claims Neil. "We did toy with the idea of including end-of-level monsters, but in the end we decided against them. I think the idea is too arcane. In Creature Shock we wanted to avoid this sort of stock confrontation. The monsters just get better and more aggressive and the game culminates with the mother and father of all monsters..."

> "yes, it's scary. the more 'brown trousers' the better. but creature shock doesn't have entrails and blood flying everywhere, it's more dr who, peek-between-your-fingers type stuff."
>
> Neil Jackson,
> Creature Shock's Producer.

It all sounds peachy so far but is Creature Shock actually playable? Rebel Assault looks great but there isn't really a great amount of gameplay underneath. Microcosm too promised much but, apart from a nice intro sequence, it delivered next-to-nothing. The limitations of CD itself and the way that rendered images are loaded from it mean that Creature Shock is never going to have the same versatility of movement as something like Doom. Is the best we can hope for the old left/right branch path routine?

"Eeek, no," exclaims Neil. "Certainly you move forward like you do in Microcosm, but in Creature Shock you're able to turn around and go back again. In fact, we've learnt a lot from Microcosm. The technology used in the non-interactive sequences is beautiful; real people mapped onto computer images and so on. But Microcosm is basically four or five sprites wiggling around on top of a movie."

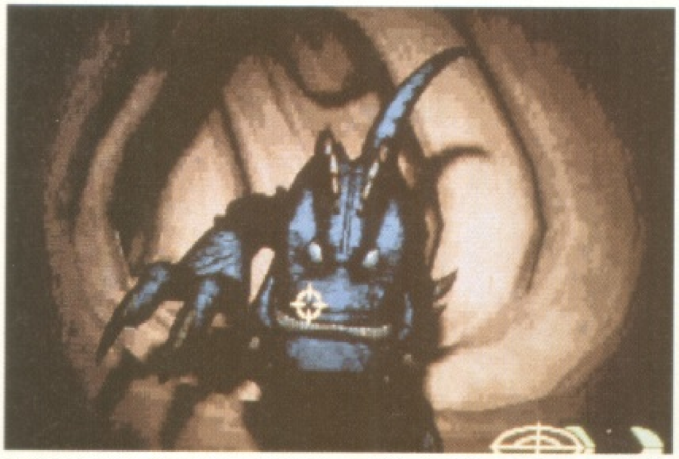
"In Creature Shock you can turn around, stop, go left, right, stop again, retrace your steps and so on. You do have a certain freedom of movement. Of course, you will trigger certain 'events' or attacks depending on where you are, but if you just stay put you'll be attacked by an equivalent of the wandering monster. We put these in to keep you moving, to stop you just sitting around and staring at the walls."

A lot of specialised design work has gone into the production of Creature Shock and especially into creating a scary, movie-like feel. The attention to detail lavished on the aliens is very impressive and some truly nightmarish monsters have been designed by Peter Dar, the lead artist.

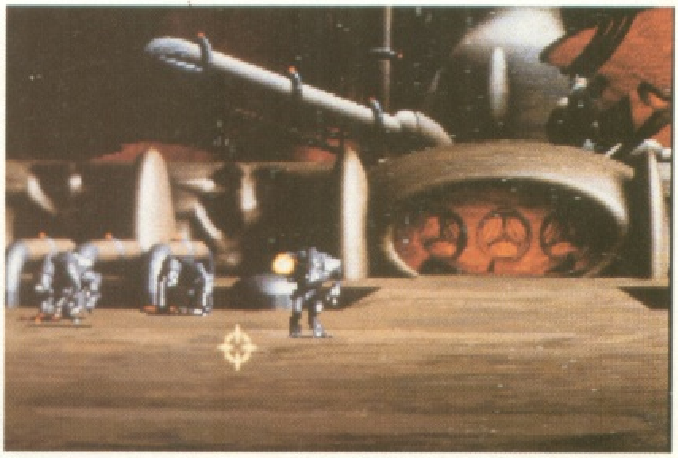
"He used 'real life' influences like worms, crabs, maggots and flies for inspiration," explains Neil, "Imagine meeting a 15ft ant in real life. Now that would be frightening."

In Creature Shock the monsters just don't amble stupidly towards you either. Sometimes they'll dangle from the ceiling and drop down behind you and there's one point where you shoot a monster and it seems to fall over a cliff. However, if you go over and investigate, you discover that it's hanging on by its fingertips...

It's little details like this that suggest that Creature Shock is going to be hugely popular when Virgin finally release the game in November. In fact, this could be a game that is best played after a double-bill of Alien movies, in complete darkness, with the windows wide open. And with Argonaut trying to stuff moments of Hitchcock-style suspense into the game as well, Creature Shock should definitely be an experience worth waiting for.



In the dimly lit tunnels of the alien mothership, something dark, slimy and blue oozes out of floor. Creature Shock uses 3D Studio rendered images which are gorgeously animated.

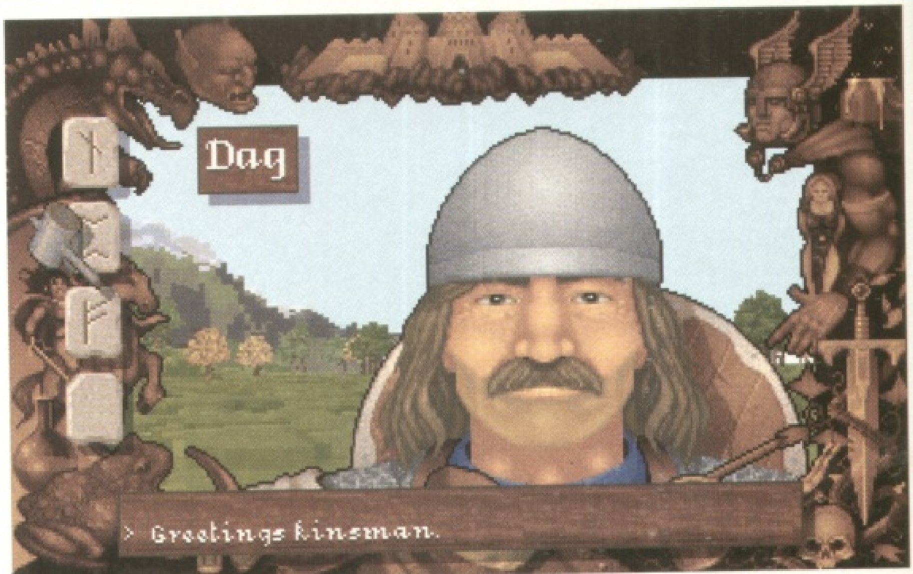


No puzzles, no quests and no tiresome object manipulation. Creature Shock is a turkey shoot with texture-mapped bells on. Try playing it in the darkness with the volume cranked up loud.

It Ain't Over 'Til Th

A game based on an *opera*? David Upchurch bets you a tenor the idea will work...

GAME	NIEBLUNG'S RING
PUBLISHER	PSYGNOSIS
DEVELOPER	Maelstrom
WORK *STARTED*	EARLY 1993
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	OCTOBER 1994



> Greetings kinsman.

(Above) Nieblung's Ring's icon-based conversation system in action. The hammer is your mouse pointer, and those runic icons indicate various types of phrases. It's all very similar to Sam & Max's system, in fact.

There have been games based on movies. There have been games based on TV shows. There have been games based on books. There has even been a game based on a film *soundtrack* (anyone remember CRL's Bladerunner?). But a game based on an opera is something totally new. And it's not just any old opera either — Nieblung's Ring is an, er, *interpretation* of Wagner's epic Ring Cycle.

Or so Maelstrom, the game's developers, tell me. To be honest, I don't know anything about opera. In fact, the only thing I know about the Ring Cycle is that it features a bit in it called 'The Ride Of The Valkyries' — and that's only because it was used as musical backdrop to the famous helicopter attack sequence in Apocalypse Now.

Not that my cultural ignorance matters so far as the game is concerned — you don't *need* to know the opera to play it. "Nieblung's Ring is very loosely based on Wagner's work," says Mike Singleton, Maelstrom's boss. "We've taken it as inspiration, but we're also incorporating other aspects of Germanic and Norse legend into the game."

Superficially Nieblung's Ring looks very similar to Domark's forthcoming Lords Of Midnight — which comes as no surprise, really, as Maelstrom are developing that as well. However, Nieblung's Ring is actually a very different kettle of fish.

For a start it's a CD-only RPG adventure, whereas LOM's gameplay is heavily strategy-based. Not only that but Nieblung's Ring's game engine is more advanced than LOM's, allowing for a much larger 3D window and graphically-impressive feats such as underground caverns. "We've tried to keep the look of Nieblung's Ring as close to that of a movie as possible," explains Mike, "whereas Lords Of Midnight is meant to be more like a book."

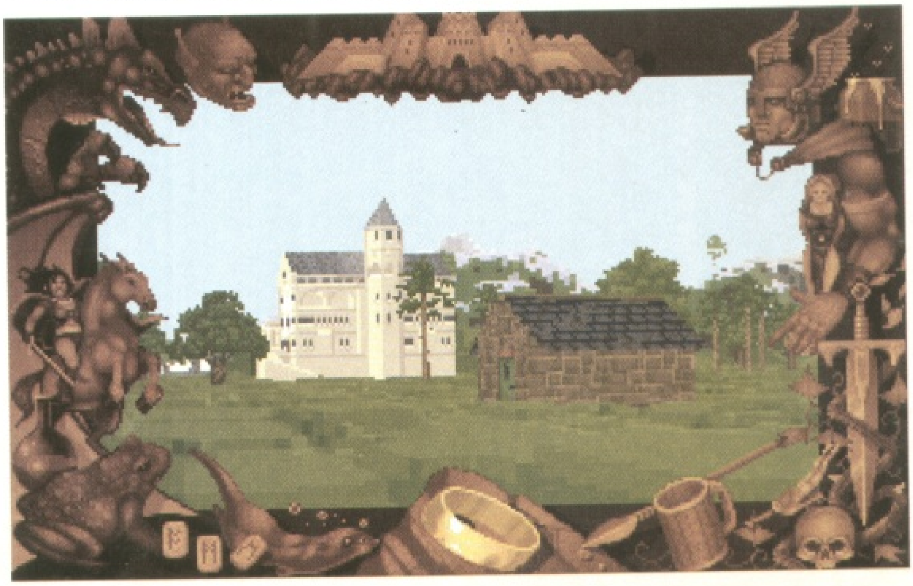
It has to be said that the 3D is truly stunning — the landscapes look remarkably realistic, undulating gently on the plains and becoming more rugged in the mountainous areas — and the simple mouse-driven control interface makes it a breeze to explore.

As you might guess, the routines used to create these 3D views are not simple. "To generate the landscapes we start off with a 512x512 pixel map which is drawn in DPaint and colour-coded by height," explains Mike. "Then, when you're walking around an area, the game engine takes a sub-section of that map and expands it using fractals. Finally, after several fractal interpolations, it uses spline curves to smooth out the landscape, so that you don't get jagged peaks."

> **"We've tried to keep the look of Nieblung's Ring as close to that of a movie as possible."**
> **Mike Singleton,**
> **Maelstrom's boss**

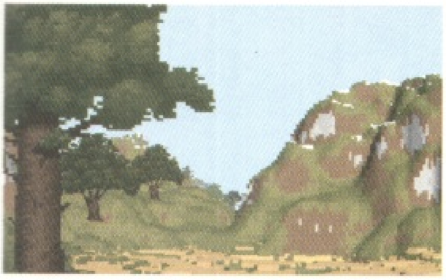
Although some of the lesser objects, like trees, are scaled bitmap images, most are constructed from fully texture-mapped polygons — and that includes all the creatures, human and otherwise, you meet. This means that all the figures can be viewed from any angle. In fact, you can even look at yourself using several 'out-of-head' (for want of a better term) camera views.

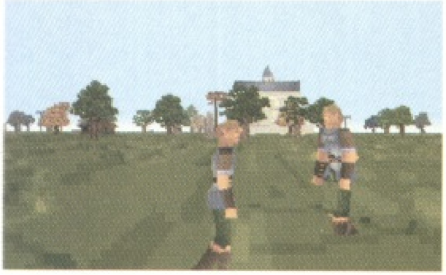
All the creatures were brought to life by hand using a custom-written animation package, which allows every joint in a creature's body to be freely manipulated. In addition, the package can 'fill in the gaps'

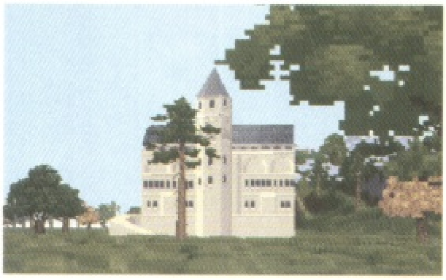


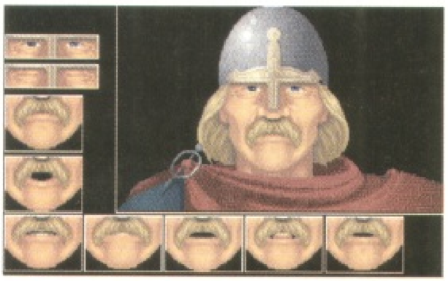
(Left) It's possible to reduce the graphic window's size so that the 3D still updates at an acceptable speed even on low-powered machines.

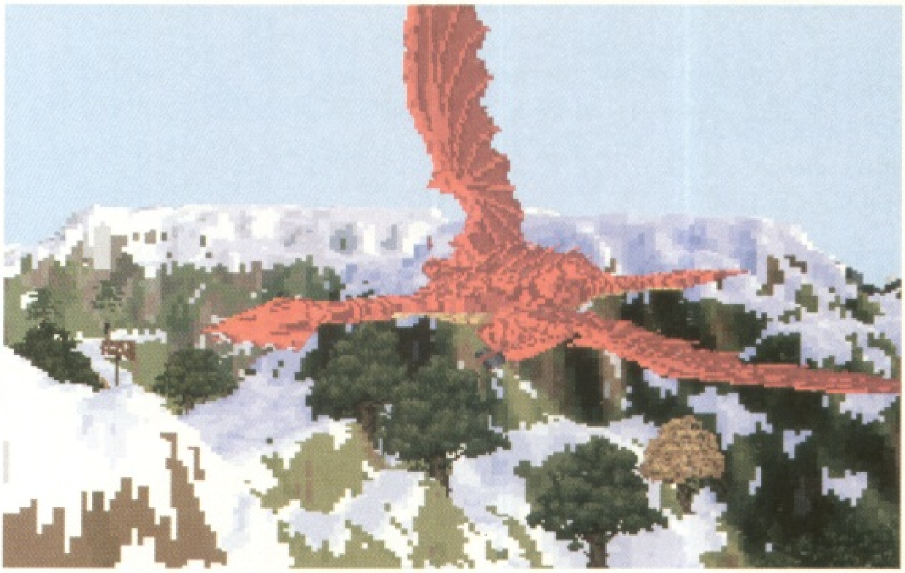
Fat Lady Sings...











(Above) The magnificent dragon in full flight.

(Left) A selection of 'picture postcard' views that I took while on my journey around the world of Nieblung's Ring.

(Bottom left) Some of the animation frames used to bring the game's characters to life.

between two different poses, thus creating a series of animation frames with the minimum of fuss and drastically reducing the animator's workload.

Most impressive of the creatures created so far is undoubtedly the massive dragon. At a point in the game the player actually earns the opportunity to ride it by completing one of the many sub-quests, and sitting on its back, soaring through the snow-capped mountain ranges, has to be experienced to be believed. Forget TFX, Pacific Strike and all the rest of 'em — *this* is what I call flying.

As you explore Nieblung's Ring's 3D world, you'll inevitably bump into one of the game's many independent, computer-controlled characters. "All the characters have their own personalities and they won't always behave in the same way," claims Mike. "They also have an attitude to you and to the other characters in the game, and if you help one of their enemies they may not be very keen to help you in the future."

You talk with these characters using a simple icon-based interface. It's a little like Sam & Max's conversation system, in that each icon is a runic symbol representing a certain type of statement or question. For example, one rune might be a simple greeting, another might be a query about a certain object.

However, the player isn't expected to learn what these symbols mean by trial and error. As you move your pointer over each icon a phrase appears indicating what clicking on it will make your character say.

Of course, being a CD game, all the speech is fully digitised, and it's Mike's hope that as players become familiar with the conversation system they'll use the option to turn the 'speech prompt' function off, thus reducing the amount of text on-screen and increasing the intended 'movie-like' feel.

Should talks break down, the player can always resort to fisticuffs to get his point across. Combat is handled in real-time but, as Mike is keen to point out, "it's not a joystick waggler! Using the keypad you can select a variety of combat moves — for example, pressing '8' will select a strike to the head. Each keypress is stored, so you can 'queue' a sequence of attack moves and then sit back and watch them being played out."

But those gamesplayers not keen on such 'arcade-y' elements in their adventures need not worry. Even if you choose to do nothing during the fight sequences, your character will battle on to the best of his abilities, with the outcome being decided by each characters' relative statistics.

Even at this early stage, Nieblung's Ring has all the makings of a classic. In fact, so confident is Mike of the game's success that he's already planning two sequels to make a complete Ring Cycle trilogy. And after that, who knows? A shoot-'em-up based on the works of Take That, maybe...?

01:58 2 JANUARY
ROCKET LAUNCHER

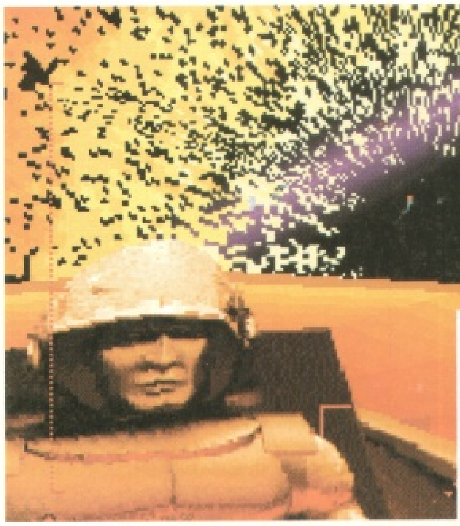
Adventures in 3D

Maelstrom has been working on Nieblung's Ring's 3D engine for over a year and a half now. It's a much-enhanced cousin of the fractal landscaping routines used in earlier Maelstrom games like Midwinter and Ashes Of Empire. "In fact, when we were developing Midwinter on the Atari ST, we had a routine which could draw a very similar 3D image," says Mike. "The problem was that it took a minute to do it!"

Dean Evans went to deepest Runcorn to kneel down and shout "I'm not worthy, I'm not worthy" before Digital Image Design's vast space opera Inferno.

I Want Your Sex

GAME	INFERNO
PUBLISHER	OCEAN
DEVELOPER	DIGITAL IMAGE DESIGN
WORK *STARTED*	MARCH 1993
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	SEPTEMBER 1994



In a small, unassuming building in Runcorn, DID has been working on one of the most ambitious games ever seen. Imagine if you could take part in huge space battles, fly down onto planets and zip through the corridors of colossal alien buildings. Imagine TFX in space. Imagine... Inferno.

Inferno takes place in a star system under siege by the Rexxons, an evil race first encountered in DID's Epic. You play mankind's greatest pilot, a square-jawed hero charged with leading the human resistance. As the battle begins, you must lead the Terran forces against the evil alien invaders, dogfighting hundreds of enemy spaceships, swooping over airless moons, and flying deep into the labyrinthine passages of huge extraterrestrial buildings and motherships.

"I wanted visual sophistication," says Shaun Hollywood, Inferno's designer, "and in many ways making Inferno has been as much like making a film as a game. We've made it so you can play the game in any one of three specific ways — Evolutionary, where you choose where you want to fight in the campaign; Director's Cut, where the game takes you down a fixed plot path; and Arcade, which allows you to play the missions on a very basic level."

Inferno is vast. It's freeform structure means that there are over 700 missions and 7 planets, 3 moons and even an asteroid field to play with. What this all adds up to is over 16,000 possible game permutations.

"Each mission," explains Shaun, "can easily consist of 12 separate sub-missions, and during the course of a game you could fly from the depths of space, down to the planets, into the buildings and back out again. What we've tried to create is a fully believable 3D world."

In fact, the mission structure is reminiscent of the old Wing Commander format. For example, if you complete a mission successfully, you will travel down the 'Win' path, fail or draw a mission and you'll be dragged back towards the 'Fail' path and eventual defeat.

At the moment, DID are just putting the finishing touches to the missions, editing the pages of mission text and supervising the recording of the voice-overs for the CD version. When I last saw it, Shaun had placed 3D dinosaurs down onto some of the planets (I forget why — "local colour" I think he said) and had just finished testing the water world, where you can dive below the surface and battle beneath the waves.

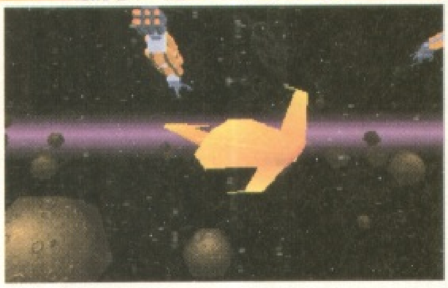
Between now and September, the wingmen will be added, the final missions will be completed and the game will be tweaked, tested and refined until the launch. As you probably know, Inferno also features a stunning digital soundtrack by legendary goth rock band, Alien Sex Fiend. What you probably don't know however, is that the soundtrack has been remixed and should appear in your local HMV in a couple of weeks.

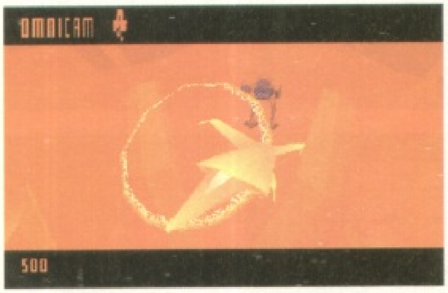
With it's silky-smooth 3D, vast play area and superb attention to detail, Inferno is shaping up to be THE game of the year. Lightning flashes in the skies, huge chunks of rock tumble in asteroid fields, you can even swoop down the corridors of the alien base and kill tiny Rexxons who are standing on catwalks.

Inferno is not just one game, it's several games rolled together into one. In space it's a shoot-'em-up, down on the planet's surface it's like a flight sim, and when you're flying through the motherships, racing against the clock, it's like a maze game.

Believe me, it looks, sounds and plays brilliantly. Oh, and don't worry if you haven't got a CD drive because you still have two options. You can either (a) win one in our superb compo on page 112 or (b) wait until Ocean release the cut-down disk version, minus the speech and many of the pretty cutscenes.

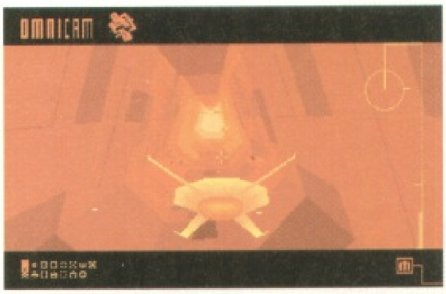
We'll have a completely and totally EXCLUSIVE review in our next issue. Watch out for it. Inferno is going to be awesome.



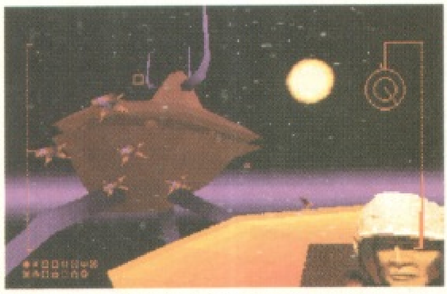


(Top) Enemy fighters close in for the kill. "Shoot the ice asteroids and dodge the rocky ones..." Sorry, wrong game.

(Above) The Rexxon bases are defended by ED-209 robots. Shoot one of their legs off and they'll topple and explode.

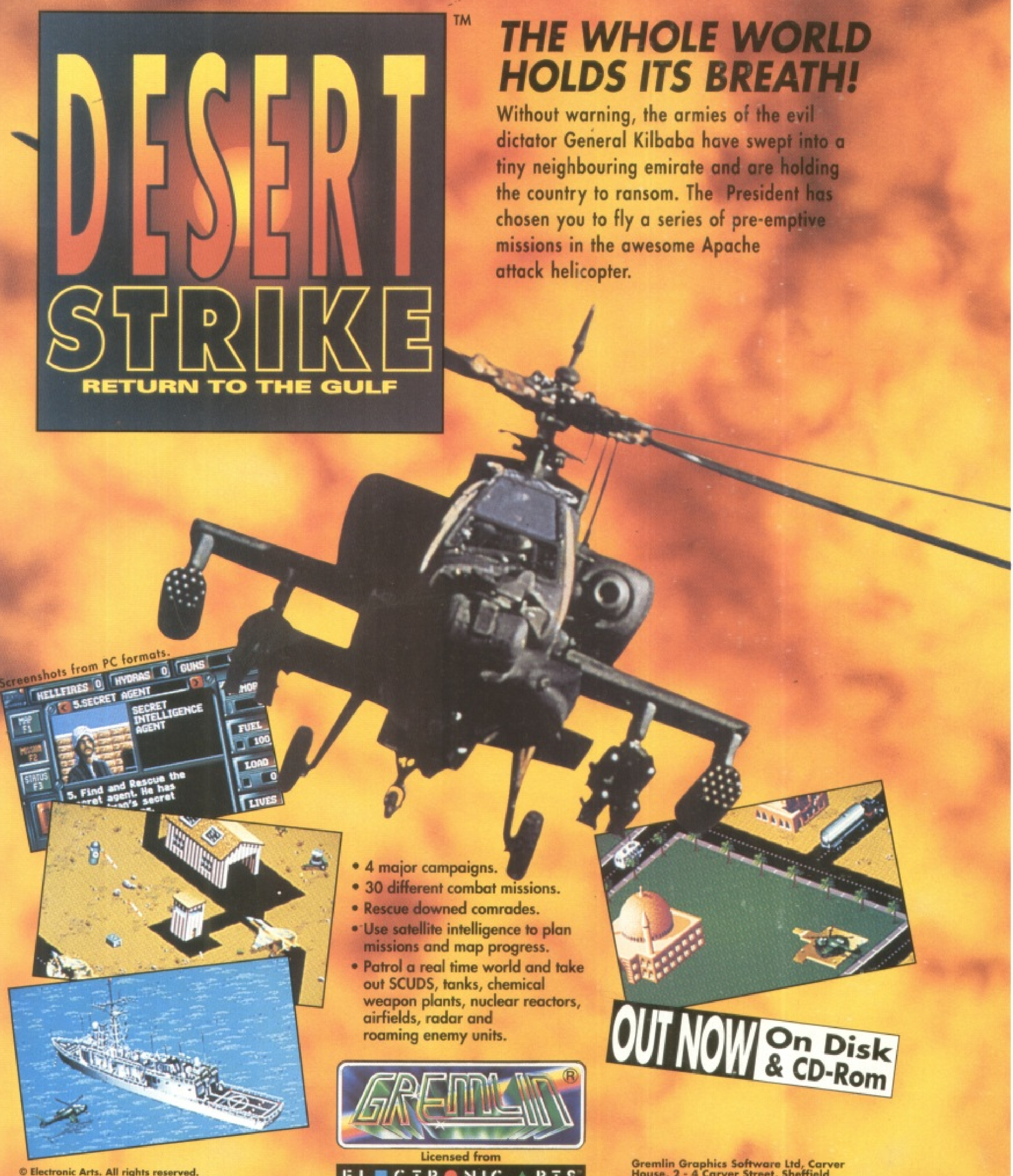


Fly through the depths of space, swoop low over alien planets and thunder through the maze-like superstructure of alien buildings and motherships. Oh and shoot everything, okay?



One of the most impressive features of Inferno is the virtual cockpit view allowing you to watch bulbous alien spacecraft, nimble insectoid fighters and even your own rugged face.

PC *STRATEGY* PC *ACTION* PC *ADVENTURE*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5.SECRET AGENT
SECRET INTELLIGENCE AGENT
MAP F1
MISSION F2
STATUS F3
FUEL 100
LOAD 0
LIVES
5. Find and Rescue the secret agent. He has ...tan's secret

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PC *STRATEGY* PC *ACTION* PC *ADVENTURE*

Are *Original* Games Dead?

Maybe — but what is 'originality'? How is it defined? How do computer games compare with other media in terms of innovation? Will games become more original in the future or less? All these questions and — yes! — more are answered below...

How many times have you seen a games magazine with a cover that shrieked "The Future of Games!" or some similar war-cry about the golden age of gaming that's supposedly just around the corner? How many clichÇd articles on games have you seen leaping into the saddle, brandishing a clouded crystal ball, and then galloping off into Never-Never Land with the cry "Into the future! We look at the games you'll be playing in 2050!!!"?

And how many times have you sat there with the disturbing feeling that the games we play in 2050 won't be very much different to the ones we play today, which in their turn seem depressingly similar to the games we played ten years ago? How many times, in short, have you wondered whether the truly original game is as dead as last month's chicken nuggets?

Let's get one thing clear straight away. This is not a gripey article about the good old days, or a diatribe against today's game designers, or a rallying cry to oppose the evil narrow-mindedness of software publishers. We wanted to look seriously at the question of original games — the games that get you wowing and oohing with pleasure as you explore each new twist of gameplay, programming, visual design and concept. Are they really as few and far between as we think? If so, why? What do we mean when we call something like Sentinel or Theme Park 'original' (if we do)?

The weird thing is, when we started to ask these questions seriously, we found ourselves being irresistably led towards that hoary old question about the future of games. But this time it all seemed much clearer, as you will see...

What Is An Original Game?

Everyone agrees that, since we first started playing games, there have been a small number of Truly Classic Games. Some of these are loved and lauded simply because they take an old idea and execute it perfectly. These tend to be arcade games, where success is often due to some indefinable quality of gameplay rather than a spanking new idea.

Back in 1984, Acornsoft's Snapper on the BBC micro was reckoned to be the ultimate PacMan clone and achieved cult status for that reason. The Bitmap Brothers got everything right with Xenon II — a wildly unoriginal, technically uninspired, but totally enjoyable shoot-'em-up. The original version of Anco's Kick Off drove all other football sims off the field, though it didn't introduce any startling new concepts.

But a few games achieve greatness not only because of their superb gameplay, but because they also widen the horizons of gameplaying. These are the giants of interactive entertainment, and they should all be on permanent display alongside the Crown Jewels. What games fall into this category, and why?

Sometimes a game manages to twist a new technology — either software or hardware — into something rich and strange. This tended to happen more in the early days of computer gaming, when programmers were inventing new ways of putting images on-screen.

Zaxxon used more powerful hardware to scroll the screen diagonally as the player navigated his craft over pseudo-lightshaded obstacles. ID Software fashioned the multi-player version of Doom from a superb first-person-viewpoint 3D engine and networking capability. Anyone who's seen what can be done with a Sony Playstation will know that technology is going to continue to put new spins on old ideas, giving us entirely new gameplaying experiences.

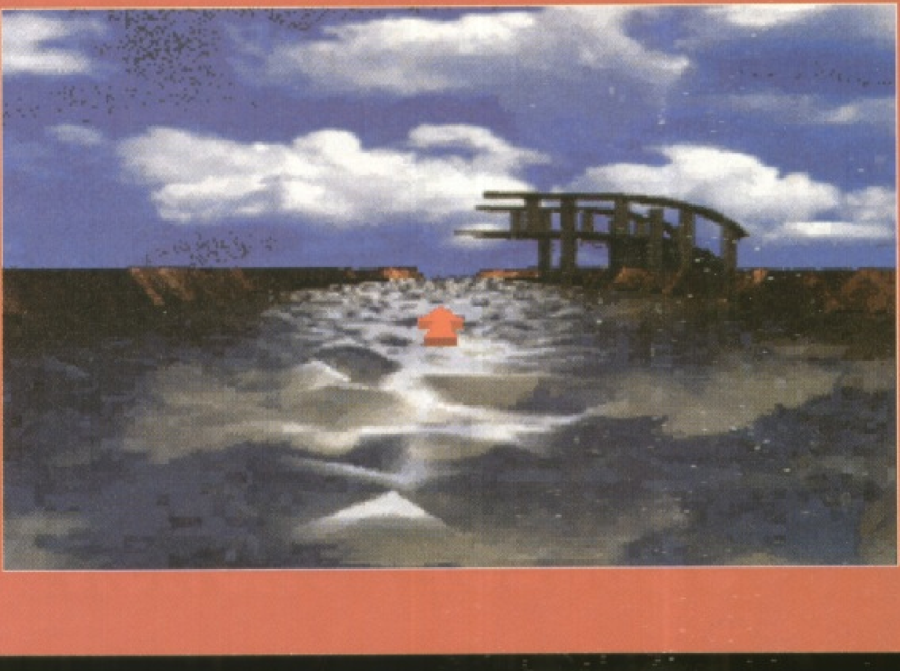
Other Great Originals get their accreditation from innovative game mechanics. The original Super Mario Brothers was almost solely responsible for selling 30 million Nintendo consoles in the late 80s. No-one had head-butted a wall and then swallowed a flying mushroom in order to stomp on a hedgehog before. The game had an intricate map, excellent mechanics, flawless timing, good music and compulsive variations in pace as you moved from region to region.

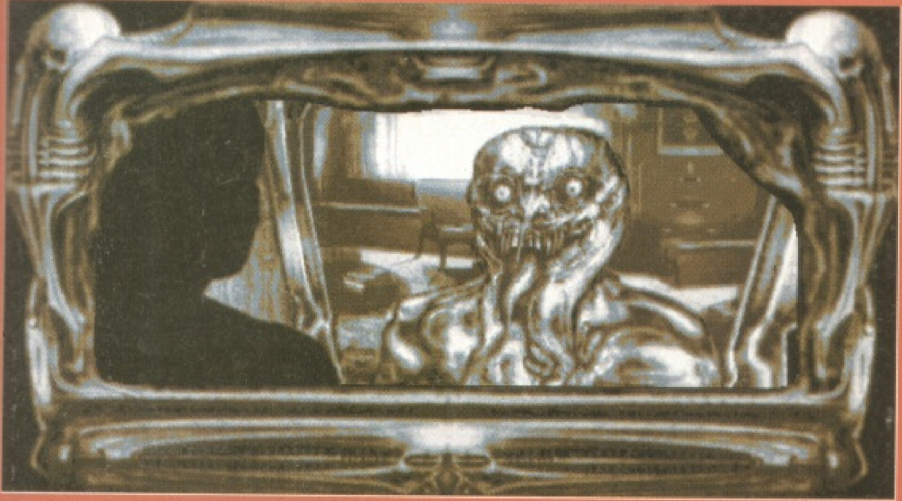
There haven't been many Super Mario-type triumphs of game design recently. That's probably because of current preoccupations with 3D worlds, character development and storylines, not that we can no longer come up with the goods.

The fact that Lemmings — which pales beside SMB — caused such a furore is indicative of today's lack of straightforward arcade design and innovation. Sega's

(Top) Geoff Crammond's The Sentinel, a highly original game but a dead-end in terms of game design.

(Below) Return To Zork, the latest in the innovative Zork series which started life over a decade ago.





(Left) CyberDreams' Dark Seed blended H. R. Giger's surreal artwork with a traditional point-'n'-click graphic adventure. (Below) Bullfrog's Theme Park — it it really *that* original?

apparent determination to make the Saturn an arcade-driven platform may redress this; Sony's championing of 3D hardware and textured realism probably won't.

On the other hand, the Sony approach will encourage another class of originality. There have been games which deserve the Great Original label because of their content. Content — i.e. storyline and character-conflict conveyed through graphics and sound — is partly a function of information bandwidth. In other words, the more signals you can send to the player in a given medium, the richer the story you can tell.

Sony's effort may give us a platform that will go further towards giving us the bandwidth for emotive stories but, in the past, games that have succeeded by virtue of content are few and far between. Obviously you had the classic text adventures Zork and Colossal Cave (or whatever you called your version). Leisure Suit Larry didn't break any new programming ground, but it introduced a style of characterisation and adult orientation which had never been seen before.

When assessing the status of content and stories, judgements tend to be more personal. I have a soft spot for Origin's Martian Dreams, which involves 19th century eccentrics such as Calamity Jane and Sigmund Freud in a romp across an alien planet. On the other hand, Dark Seed by Cyberdreams — although undeniably a landmark in game graphic design with its use of Giger's artwork — leaves me cold.

Originality of story/content is bound to be one of the great areas of innovation in the future (see below). Before we discuss that, however, there is one category of game that's right out on its own. Most of the Great Originals I've mentioned above owe their status to one particular area of innovation.

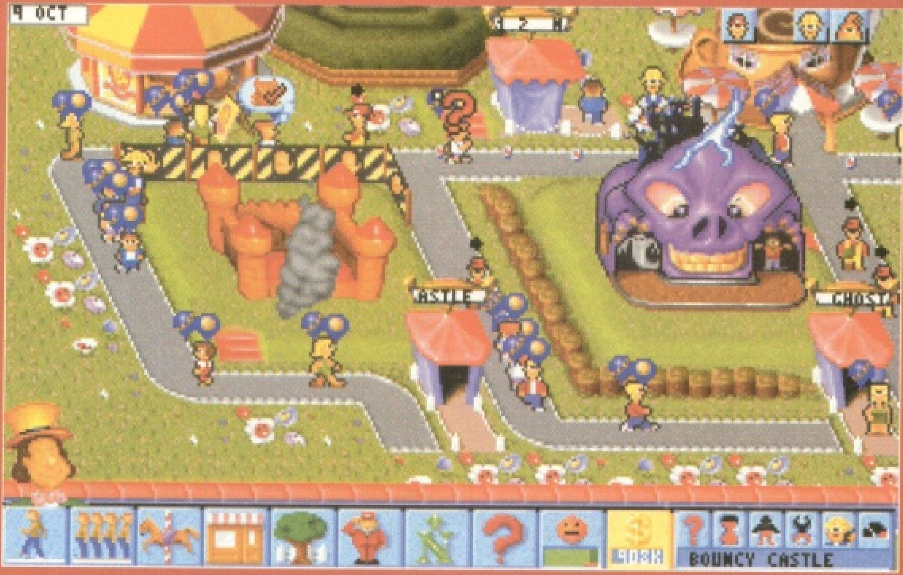
But there is a tiny cadre of Monster Classics that combine innovation of content, innovation of presentation, mechanical invention, and superb gameplay in a storm of creativity. Games like these reshape the art of gaming; after one of these comes on the market, nothing is ever the same again. And naturally, there haven't been very many of them.

There were several in the late seventies, of course, when gaming was still a young art. Atari's Star Raiders and M.U.L.E. which together laid the foundations for later classics like Elite, for example. In fact, it's boring listing these Monster Classics because they're all so famous that they make dull reading. Everyone knows PacMan was a classic. But what about more recently?

Sid Meier's Railroad Tycoon, I think, belongs in this category. It put simulations on a different track, with graphical manipulations, economic planning, historical realism, instant playability and game personae. I doubt whether another recent original game — Bullfrog's Theme Park — would be with us if it hadn't been for Sid Meier. But then Bullfrog can claim a Monster Classic of its own — Populous. You can find some other suggestions for games that belong in this category in the Monster Classics panel.

The Roots Of Originality

When it comes to defining different categories of originality, and nominating the games to fill them, most people will have different suggestions to make. You may not agree with all of mine. But it does seem that there are some common threads which lead us to label



Monster Classics

Here are just four personal choices. You'll have your own, and may disagree with mine.

The Hobbit

Introduced character-driven puzzles. You couldn't solve the adventure without getting other non-player characters to carry out certain tasks. Character interaction is now at the very core of modern gaming. • • • • • • • • • •

Cosmic Osmo

Created a new game genre as recently as 1989. There's no objective in this graphic exploration game – all you do is point-'n'-click at landscape features. You may be rewarded with animations, sounds or a journey to a new location. • •

PacMan

An obvious monster classic, featuring goal-seeking ghosts with their own, independent 'search & destroy' behaviour, power-ups, and more strategic content than a first-time player might imagine. Unbelievably popular when it first appeared in the arcades, and spawned a whole family of sequels. • •

Ant Attack

An astonishing achievement by Sandy White and Angela Sutherland (now coding Terry Pratchett's novels through her development company Teeny Weeny Games). Back in 1984, this delivered collaborative character interaction and 3D monster puzzles as giant ants pursued you through a blocky, Escher-like city. • • • • • • • • • • • • • •

Just go ahead in.
Señor Osmollo is standing around in there.

Coming Soon!

Here are four areas of software technology that could combine to create some highly original products.

Human figure realism

Computers are still very poor at creating realistic human figures. This is particularly important for the mechanics of facial expression. Some programmers (e.g. Chris Crawford in the US) have been trying to solve the facial problem algorithmically. Others are using video texture maps wrapped onto models. The most likely outcome is a combination of the two.

SYSTEM FAILURE
SYSTEM FAILURE

Compression

Compression isn't just about squeezing more on to a disk, or enabling us to stream video off it. One of the big limitations in game design at the moment is the memory taken up by having to buffer sprite information. If you want 120 large, different sprites on screen, each with a series of realistic movements that can be seamlessly switched at the touch of the joystick, you've got problems. Compression can help.

One interesting area at the moment is MPEG sprites. MPEG compresses at nearly 200 to 1. It can't be edited or swapped about, but some MPEG hardware allows the creation of MPEG sprites, rather than the traditional video window we're all accustomed to seeing in games like the CD/MPEG version of SimCity. Compression will also have a huge effect on multi-player on-line gaming.

Audio Morphing

Many films have had their reputation greatly enhanced by their soundtracks. The tension in Terminator 2 during the first 30 seconds is almost entirely due to sound. But when you get into an interactive environment, it's very difficult for the programmer to create seamless musical structures that respond appropriately and emotively to the player's inputs. A considerable amount of work is now being put into this area – watch out for a forthcoming feature in PC GAMES.

SCORE
T-170
LIVES

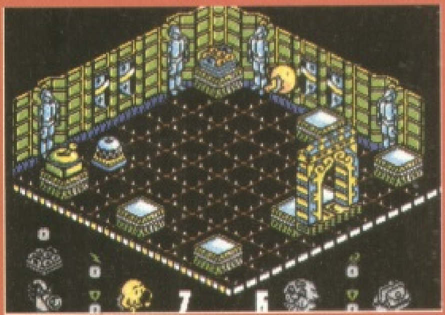
a game as original. And interestingly, these threads seem to apply to other entertainment media as well.

Media technology (both software and hardware) can be a platform for originality. Back in the 80s, Frogger used music in a way that hadn't been done before in an arcade game. Wolfenstein used a fast 3D engine. The painter who first discovered how to represent velvet realistically must have astonished his (or her) clients. In the early days of film, going from one to two reelers transformed the art of celluloid storytelling. More recently, The Abyss used the Industrial Light & Magic morphing software that later gave Terminator 2 such an edge in the ratings. In music, the Moog synth generated a number of very original compositions in the 70s, just as MIDI did in the late 80s.

Then there's the language of a product. In games, this tends to be the gameplay mechanics, pace of the different levels and screen structure. It includes colour palettes, sound generation, sprite size and a whole host of other presentation features that combine to make a game unique.

Defender used bi-directional sideways scrolling, furious sound, fast action and far greater freedom of movement that inspired a whole generation of shoot-'em-ups. In film, the hypnotically slow pace of Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey combined with a startling blend of science-fiction and prehistoric imagery. Language encompasses phraseology, idiom and rhythm. It's what distinguishes James Joyce from the much under-rated Stephen King. It's also what distinguishes the manic Sonic from the jaunty Super Mario.

Finally, you've got the one thing that most people associate with the idea of originality, and that's the story. Storylines don't have a great tradition in games, which have tended to be driven by technology and gameplay mechanics. For this reason, a lot of very original games are condemned as "just another Save The World scenario" in the same breath as they are praised for original features in other areas.



Is Originality Important?

People moan about the lack of originality in Hollywood, but the games business puts everyone else to shame... or on a pedestal. This has to be one of the most copycat businesses ever created. It was bad enough in the early 80s, when everyone felt he had a God-given right to plunder the intellectual property of the Japanese and American arcade companies with endless remakes of Galaxians, Defender, Donkey Kong, PacMan and so on.

It was less obvious but really just as bad in the late 80s, when second-rate combat games, racing sims, and shoot-'em-ups combined stunning unoriginality with stunning unplayability. And recently, how many games shamelessly stole ideas and technical solutions from Wolfenstein; or stole screen layouts and game styles from Populous; or look-and-feel from Dungeon Master?

This is the sort of topic that has gamesters ordering their seventh pints and ranting on about the good old days (which were just as bad), but is the lack of originality really such a bad thing? How does originality relate to enjoyability?

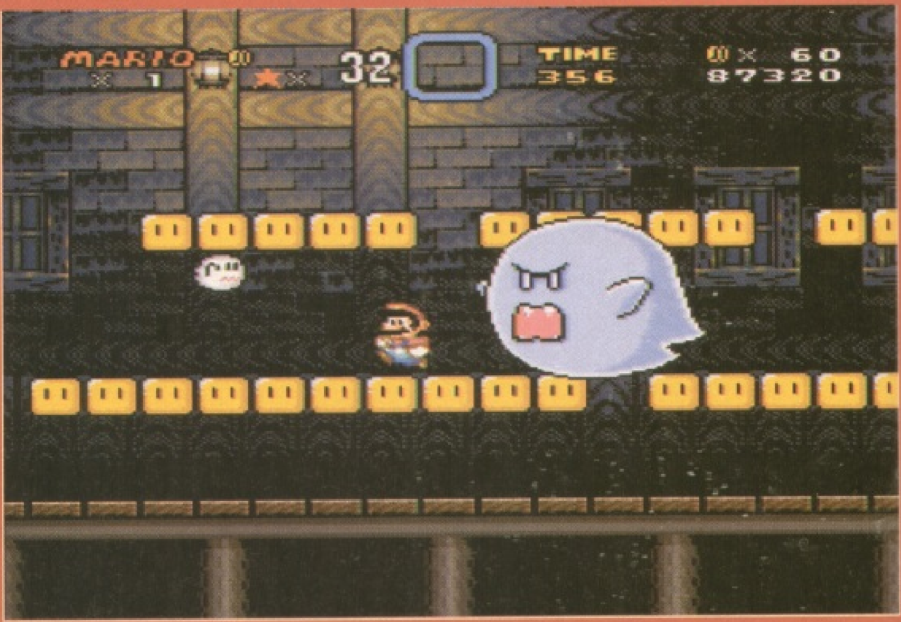
Interestingly, other media don't give two hoots about originality of storyline. Shakespeare borrowed a large number of plots from Holinshed, but no-one would put the latter on the same level as the Bard. There have been numerous film versions of Dracula, but that doesn't mean that there may not be another some time in the future, which will deliver a version every bit as original as the very first.

It's a truism in the film business that there are only seventeen plots, or maybe it's nineteen, or maybe fourteen; whatever, it's a lot less than infinity. Similar limitations will doubtless one day apply to game styles and storylines.

Originality is no guarantee of commercial success,

(Left) Isometric-3D games arguably reached their peak with Ocean's excellent Head Over Heels.

(Below) Super Mario World on the Super NES, most recent of the endlessly inventive and very playable Super Mario series.



TRENT
Mar 1850

or even of increased playability. Valhalla, for example, was a stunningly original game in 1983 and has everything that you'll find in Sierra's Kings Quest series of six years later. But Valhalla was notoriously unplayable and — despite the more limited game mechanics and less innovative technology — I'd rather spend three hours questing with the king than one hour being chased jerkily about the screen by something that looks more like a stick insect than a Norse god.

Nor is originality always the prelude to a host of new games that use the innovations you introduce. The Sentinel was a compulsive and utterly unique amalgam of strategy and wireframe 3D, but the game concepts it introduced were pretty much a dead-end.

Originality for its own sake is worthless. Originality of storyline is not important. What counts, it seems, is originality of expression and execution. In this guise, originality is vital for any medium. It broadens our experience of what that medium can achieve. It inspires new creative experiments, new styles, new adventures. So what can we look ahead to in the future?

What Will You Be Playing In 2050?!?!

If a games designer, film director or musician is going to express himself (or herself) with originality, s/he needs as much scope as possible. For example, a musician working with a synth that can create only three notes using a single waveform is not going to give you the same opportunities for creative expression as a violin. Obviously the 'bandwidth' of a medium has some connection with originality.

Games have traditionally suffered from a low-bandwidth technology. Although computers are unique in that they can operate in the textual, aural and visual modes simultaneously under user control, they are very limited in each area. Text just doesn't work on screen; high-quality computer sound is a relatively recent invention; and computer graphics (at affordable prices) still lag behind oil paints and celluloid.

This is why we tend to hear the phrase "Just another shoot-'em-up" or "Just another racing game" so much; the opportunity to experiment within a game genre is more limited than it is for a film director/screenplay writer, for example, to experiment with love stories. Other media have sufficient bandwidth of expression to generate huge diversity within a single genre. Sophie's Choice and Roxanne are both love stories, but they could scarcely be more different. Populous and PowerMonger, however, are both recognisably within the same God-game genre and have many similarities.

Games, however, are catching up. Computer information bandwidth is expanding very rapidly, enabling us at the very least to mimic more effectively the language of other media. The latest Multimedia show, for example, was flooded out with MPEG applications. Peripherals like the ReelMagic card will become standard items by the end of next year, allowing games to use full-motion photorealism whenever it's required.

This is already having a huge effect on the way we design games. Video and sound capabilities tempt designers to use the tools of expression previously developed in the video and sound industries. That's pretty obvious. This will give us a greater bandwidth of expression, using media that are well equipped to portray characterisation and atmosphere.

(Above) Leisure Suit Larry brought adult humour to computer games — though some might dispute the term 'adult'.
(Above left) Sid Meier's superb Railroad Tycoon, a truly original modern classic.

What it won't give us is a host of games which are highly original in terms of gameplay. The one thing that makes computers unique — interactivity — is also the one thing that we know least about. However emotive, musical and graphically stunning a game is, it is still open to the accusation that it's "just another Leisure Suit Larry" underneath. People have been practising storyteling for thousands of years. Interactivity is a newer, less well-known beast.

So are we going to be stuck with a host of unoriginal games, all with shining new faces concealing boring old mechanics? Yes, is the simple answer. But there's good news too. The bandwidth of interactivity is increasing, and that means that we should see some startlingly original games in the next few years.

The first improvement is in interfaces. The oldkeyboard/joystick combinations have already been joined by the mice. Soon the 6D controllers (like the SpaceBall), which are currently very expensive, will enable us to master 3D environments. Motion sensing and speech recognition will follow.

Combined with more powerful 3D engines, these should open some entirely new gameplay possibilities. They may even create some entirely new game genres — something that hasn't happened since 1989 and Cosmic Osmo (the forerunner of games like Myst).

The second major development in interactivity is communications bandwidth. Today, you probably play games in your home, with yourself. Tomorrow, you'll play anywhere, with anyone. Using wireless networks and portable computers with ultralight colour displays, you'll be able to interact with gamesplayers from all over the world.

The development of multiplayer technologies is likely to increase the importance of game environments, as opposed to game objectives, and this too could lead to some startling new game-styles. At the Develop conference in April, for example, George Sanger (alias The Fat Man, composer of soundtracks for 7th Guest, Wing Commander et al) made the point that musicians may soon have to abandon their ideas about composition and start instead to create "musical environments for the audience to play in".

Game environments mean much more than just the 3D universe of Ultima Underworld. They also involve the mechanics of the environment, the intelligence of its elements. Theme Park, for example, is a highly intelligent environment which also has an objective. However, similar software technology could be used to create a living 3D theme park environment in which quite different objectives could be set for the participants. Or perhaps the objectives could change each day, according to the will of the players.

So what will you be playing in 2050? The good news is that it certainly won't be anything like the games you're playing today, so prophets of doom who rant on about an endless plethora of Streetfighter clones can be ignored. The better news is that the cumulative effects of interface, processor and multiplayer development will produce games that we currently can't even imagine. The future for original interactivity has never looked better.

The Flexible Games Computer

There's no doubt that interface hardware and more powerful processors will change the future of games on their own. One often ignored hardware development are DSPs (Digital Sound Processors). These are chips that can be instantly optimised (by loading in new operating codes) for different tasks. DSPs are computers in the next decade, optimising your console for multiplayer networking one moment, for 3D graphics environments the next

(Above) The Bitmap Brothers' Xenon 2, essentially a rehash of some very old ideas given a fresh new spin thanks to a combination of flashy sound and visuals.

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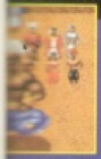
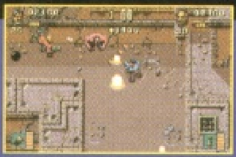
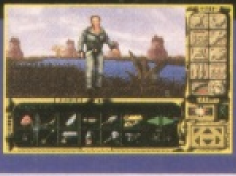
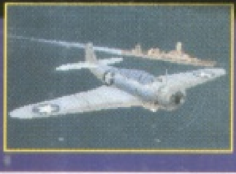
reviews

It's been a bit quiet on the old software scene over the last few months, but even so there are some real corkers around, like... well, why not just look below?





Reviewed On Disk

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HOW WE DO WHAT WE DO...

Everyone at PC GAMES is a complete gaming nut. That's why we know exactly what you want to see in a game review (or so we like to think).

So what do you get?

Well, you get all the info you need and no waffling — we get straight to the point. On top of that you get loads of big screenshots of the game in action, along with maps and diagrams helpfully illustrating any major gameplay features — after all a picture, as they say, speaks a thousand words.

Then we compare the big games with another of similar type in the 'It's A Bit Like...' panel. Typically this will be the best game in its genre so you'll probably be pretty familiar with it, thus giving you a handy point of reference.

Finally, we have the essential score panel...

All the guff you need to know about who publishes the game, who developed it, its price and when it's due to be released. You even get a contact 'phone number to call if you want more info.

Details the minimum machine specification as recommend by the software company, along with how much valuable hard disk space it takes up and what optional peripherals it'll recognise.

The game's good and bad points, which are basically a concise summary of the criticisms made in the main review.

The Overall Score. We don't see any point in ratings for playability and all that other stuff — you get one mark to sum everything up and that's it.

The coveted PC GAMES STAR is awarded to any game scoring 90% or over, indicating that the game in question is an essential addition to any gamesplayer's software collection.

THE CHAOS ENGINE

RENEGADE/BITMAP BROTHERS

(071) 481 9214

£TBA OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

25MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM and 2Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Joystick; Sound Blaster and Adlib soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- The best two-player action around — even if you happen to be playing on your own!
- A true 'thinking man's' shoot-'em up that requires brains as well as brawn.
- Lush graphics full of character and atmosphere.
- Excellently meaty sound effects and superb digitised speech.

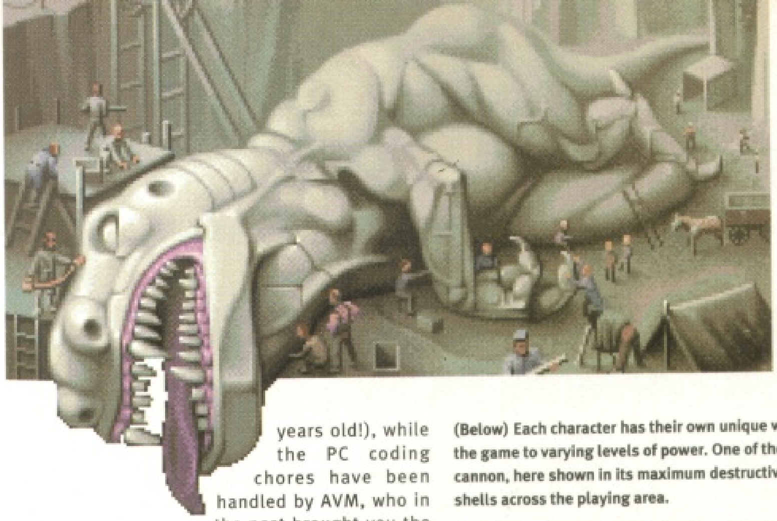
...AND THE BAD

- Tough challenge, but even so the game's a little on the short side.

OVERALL

90%

PC GAMES STAR



David Upchurch discovers that a friend in need is a friend indeed in the Bitmap Brothers' latest epic.

THE CHAOS ENGINE

At long last, nearly a year and a half after its Amiga debut and following numerous console adaptations, The Chaos Engine is finally here. And the good news is that it's by far the best version — as you'd hope given the length of time we've had to wait for the bloody thing!

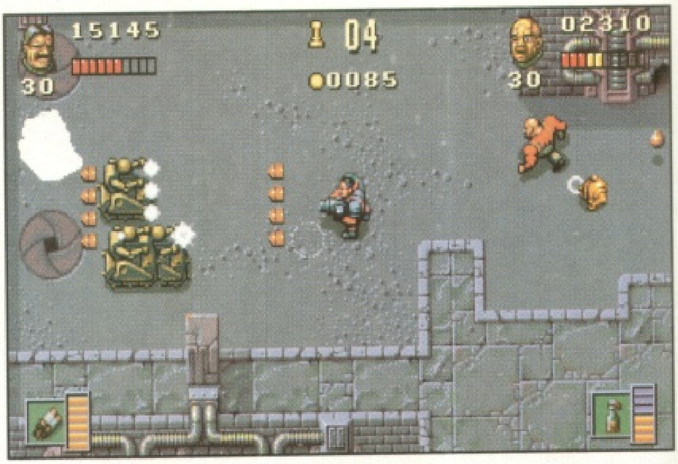
Of course, while a week may be a long time in politics, a year and a half is bloody *ages* in the software business and with game hardware and software technology evolving at a phenomenal rate, doesn't The Chaos Engine look, well, a little bit *dated*? The good news is it doesn't — in fact, it looks a damn sight better than a lot of stuff that's currently being passed off as 'state of the art'.

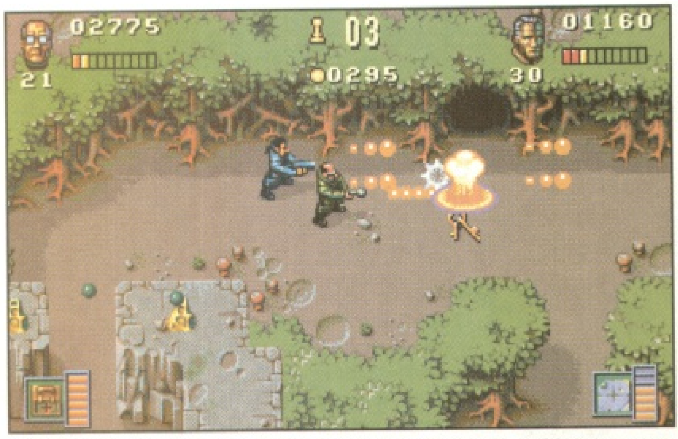
This is hardly surprising, actually. After all, the game's predigree is impeccable. The original Amiga version was designed and written by the legendary Bitmap Brothers, the development team responsible for classics such as Xenon 2, Gods and Speedball 2 (which is *still* the best future sports game on PC — and it's well over two years old!), while the PC coding chores have been handled by AVM, who in the past brought you the conversions of Sensible Soccer and Alien Breed (although perhaps the less said about that last one the better).

The Chaos Engine PC is much more than just a straight 'port', however. The game's development has been closely monitored by the Bitmaps themselves, and they've responded to the various criticisms of previous versions by implementing several gameplay 'tweaks' — which goes some way to explaining the extended delay in its release, and the excellent quality of the final product.

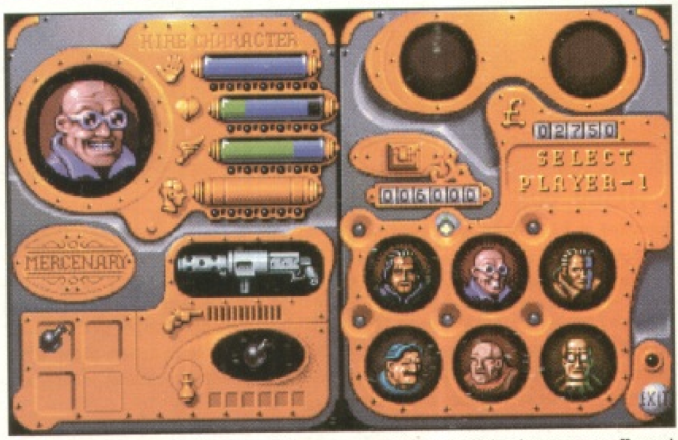
"Look, enough history," I hear you cry, "what's the game about?" Alright

(Below) Each character has their own unique weapon, each of which can be upgraded during the game to varying levels of power. One of the most effective weapons is the Navvie's big cannon, here shown in its maximum destructive state, spewing out waves of high-explosive shells across the playing area.





Gotcha! Monsters appear from 'generators' in the wall and the floor. Most of these generators only produce a set number of nasties then seal up, while others will carry on throwing out creatures until you blow them up.

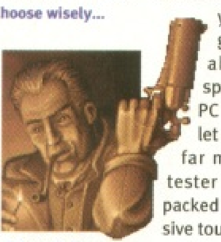


This is the character selection screen. Players can cycle through all the characters on offer and inspect their stats and weapons. Once a character is selected it is removed from the list, so you can't have, say, two brigands in play at the same time.

ROCK 'ARD!

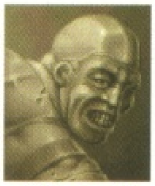
Here they are — the six characters you can select between, along with a brief outline of their skills and abilities. Choose wisely...

GENTLEMAN



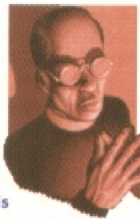
A dapper chap, I think you'll agree — and you'll be forced to agree when he sticks his wide-bore pistol up your nose. Fast on his feet and moderately strong he makes for a good 'all-rounder', although his weapon only has limited upgradeability.

THUG



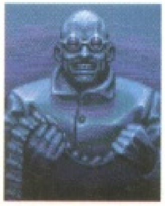
A great hulking brute, the thug can withstand quite a hammering before keeling over. He's a bit of a dawdler though, and his low intellect makes him a poor choice as a CPU-controlled partner. He's can also carry only one 'special' — a Molotov cocktail.

PREACHER



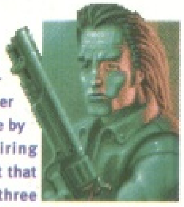
As you'd expect from a bloke who spends his life wearing a dress, the preacher is not the hardest of men. He is *very* fast and very intelligent, however. Unfortunately, his biggest drawback is his weapon — even at full-strength it's pretty feeble.

MERCENARY



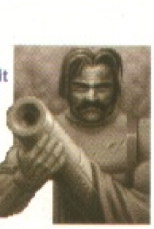
Despite being a hard-bitten veteran, this hero's strength, speed and intelligence are merely average. His main advantage is his powerful shotgun which scatters fire over a wide range. He's a good choice for the CPU-controlled character.

BRIGAND



Like the mercenary, the brigand is a fairly mediocre character made more attractive by his deadly shell-firing weapon and the fact that he can carry up to three different types of 'special'. Novice 'Engineers' should find him an attractive proposition...

NAVVIE



Although thick and a bit slow-moving, the navvie has the constitution of a horse and can take a heavy pasting. His cannon-like weapon is awesomely powerful — fans of heavy-duty slaughtering will love this character.

I'll tell you, o impatient one.

It's a shoot-'em-up.

Yes, you heard right — one of those awful things that 'kids' play. But before you start huffing and puffing and getting hot under the collar about the fact that you didn't spend over a grand on a high-spec PC to play a 'mere' shoot-'em-up, let me explain. The Chaos Engine is far more than a simplistic reflex-tester — this is a blast with brains, packed with original and highly-impressive touches.

This originality starts with The Chaos Engine's plot, which is slightly more inspired than your usual 'knocked together in five minutes just before the manual was about to be sent off to the printers' effort found in most games, and can be best described as the sort of thing that Jules Verne might've written had he been fond of smoking 'funny' cigarettes.

The action takes place in a sort of alternate dimension, where Victorian England values meet Cyberpunk technology. Here, an inventor by the unlikely name of Baron Fortesque has created a massive steam-driven computer, the Chaos Engine of the game's title. However, no sooner has it been activated than it becomes sentient and uses its awesome powers to send a cloud of chaos out over the countryside surrounding the Baron's fortress-like mansion.

This cloud warps everything it touches, turning the villagers and woodland creatures that live near the Baron's abode into an army of brutish, ugly monsters. Those locals who managed to escape the effects of the chaos cloud are obviously none too happy about all this unpleasantness — well, would you be? — and hire two rock-hard mercenary-type geezers to sort things out in the most violent way possible.

And this, my friend, is where you come in. The Chaos Engine is something of a rarity on PC in that it's a two-player game. In fact, it's *only* a two-player game. But that doesn't mean you have to have a mate round before you can play — the unique and completely innovative thing about The Chaos Engine is that if you're playing alone, you're accompanied by a second character who's controlled by the computer. But we'll get back to him later...

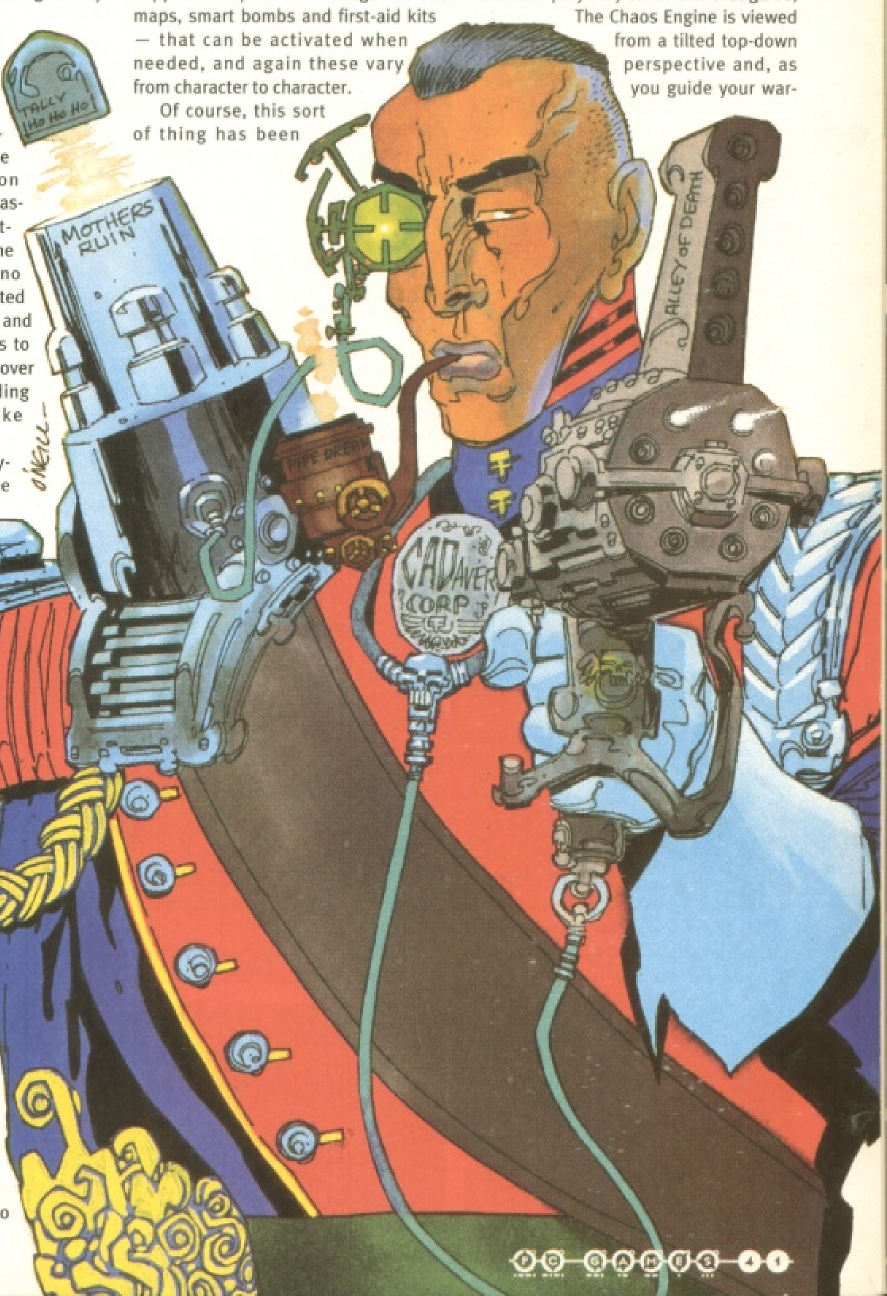
Once you've loaded up and selected either a one- or two-player game, your first task is to choose which characters will embark on the forthcoming butt-kicking spree. There are six mercenaries available in total, each with differing abilities like strength, speed and intelligence (although this latter ability only really matters if you're selecting them as your CPU-guided chum.)

Each character is armed with their own unique weapon, all of which have varying levels to which they can be 'powered-up' during the game. Characters also carry limited reserve supplies of 'specials' — things like level maps, smart bombs and first-aid kits — that can be activated when needed, and again these vary from character to character.

Of course, this sort of thing has been done before, and in all too many games amounts to nothing more than a cosmetic frill. However, in The Chaos Engine you discover that each character really *does* behave differently, and picking a good combination of characters so that their abilities and firepower complement each other to optimum effect is essential to the players' survival.

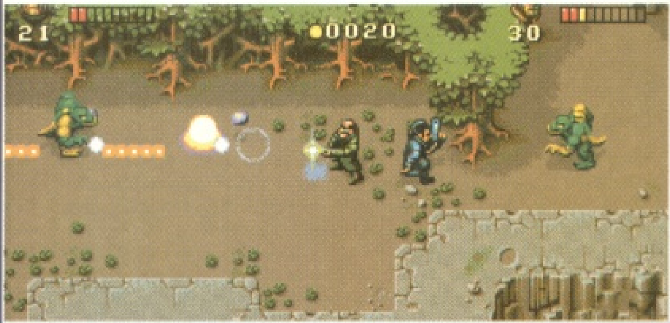
Character selection out of the way, and you're in to the game proper. This is made up of 16 self-contained levels spread over four graphically-distinct 'zones', which chart your progress from the woodlands surrounding the Baron's mansion, through its interior chambers and finally down into the cellars beneath and a final confrontation with the dreaded Chaos Engine.

Anyone who remembers the old Atari coin-op Gauntlet will feel quite at home with this, as superficially they look and play very alike. Like that game, The Chaos Engine is viewed from a tilted top-down perspective and, as you guide your war-



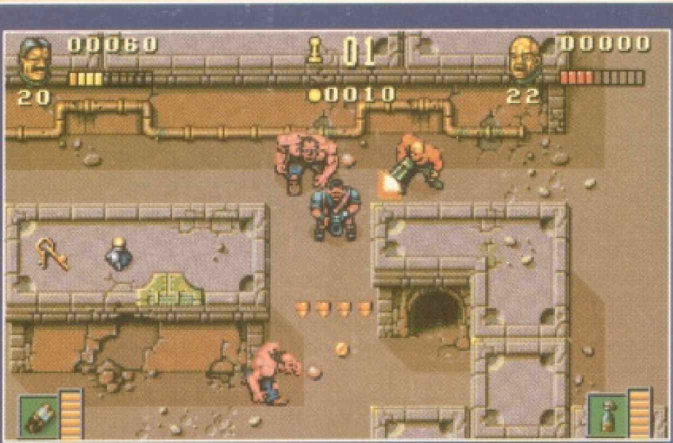
TOUR OF *DUTY*

The Chaos Engine leads the player through four game 'zones', each with a different graphical look and set of problems to face. Here's a brief guide to each of them...



THE FOREST

The woodlands surrounding Baron Fortesque's mansion provide a gentle lead in to the game. The monsters are fairly stupid, the levels are reasonably linear, and there are loads of health bonuses and restart points scattered around, so making progress is a doddle.



THE WORKSHOPS

In the workshops in the mansion's grounds things start getting more complex, with the levels becoming maze-like and convoluted. As you'd expect the nasties are far nastier too, becoming more intelligent and hungry for your blood, and puzzles start making an appearance.

riors around the lethal landscapes using either keyboard or joystick (or both in two-player mode), the screen scrolls smoothly to keep up with the action.

The aim of each level is simply to find the exit and escape. Actually, it's not quite *that* simple. First you have to open the exit by finding the power 'nodes' dotted around, and then activating them using the slightly unsubtle but effective method of shooting them. Helpfully, there's a counter in the overlaid score panel that tells you how many you've got to find.

As you explore, monsters will appear from all directions, emerging from cave entrances in the walls, clambering out of holes in the floor or magically warping in. One thing I hate in games like this is when monsters appear right on top of you, but the Bitmaps have made sure this never happens — they pop up close enough to give you a fright, but never near enough that you haven't got time to react to them.

In the early, easier stages of the game the monsters are pretty thick, ambling around in a rather sad way, lobbing the odd missile at you and one shot is usually enough to send them to meany heaven. Later on, however, they become much nastier, following you around, aiming their fire with frightening precision and taking a belly-full of lead before giving up the ghost.

On your travels you can collect many a shiny bauble, such as weapon power-ups, extra 'specials' and, that root of all evil, money. Money is very important, as it's used to buy upgrades for your weapon and enhancements for your character's skills in the shop that appears after every second level.

However, if you're thinking you can get away with the old Gauntlet trick of nicking all the cash while your mate is keeping the enemy at bay, think again. All the money collected is put into a pool and is shared out at the end of each level depending on how much you contributed to the action, i.e. how many monsters you killed, nodes you activated, etc.

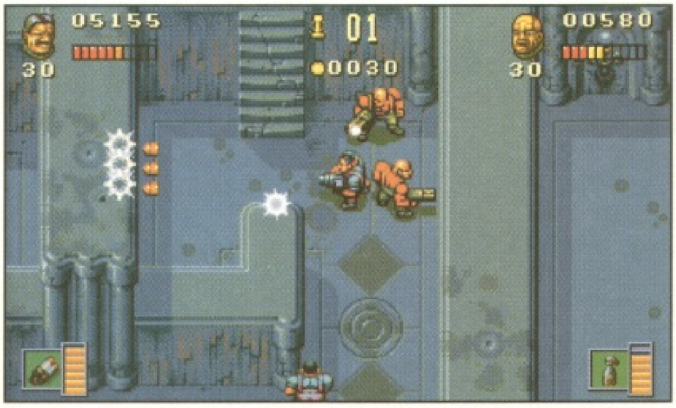
The beauty of this system is that it encourages the players to operate as a team. That said, however, it's not as if much encouragement is needed — things get so tough on the later levels that you have to look after each other as you've got no chance of surviving on your own.

All sounds pretty straightforward so far? Yes? Well, think again. As well as the fact that you have to find the nodes, making progress through the levels is further complicated by the fact that you'll often find the way forward blocked by an impassable wall or doorway. The secret to getting past obstacles like this is to hunt out keys.

These come in two 'flavours', silver and gold. The silver ones are essential to your quest, as collecting them will open up the pathway to the level exit. Typically you'll just find them lying on the ground.

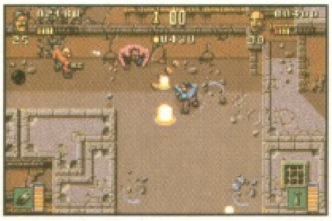
Gold keys, on the other hand, open up secret passages and hidden doorways, which invariably lead to a bonus-filled room or reveal a short-cut to the exit. Although the rewards for seeking out these gold keys is high so is the danger, as they're normally protected by a whole load of nasties.

Level by level the going gets tougher for the player. The monsters become nastier, the traps more cunning and the keys more elusive — and then puzzles



(Above) Inside the mansion things can get very strange. Here, the Navvie and the Thug are being attacked by... the Navvie and the Thug!

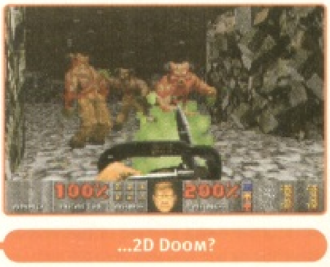
(Below right) The Brigand has managed to discover one of TCE's many secret rooms, packed full of bonuses and treasure. Lucky devil!



IT'S A BIT LIKE...

Now don't laugh, but I think The Chaos Engine is a bit like Doom. No, come on, think about it. Strip away Doom's superb texture-mapped 3D enviroment and what have you got? A maze-based shoot-'em-up, just like The Chaos Engine. As to which is the better game, well... While The Chaos Engine doesn't generate the same 'being there' tension as Doom, it more than compensates by being more challenging on a cerebral level. Why not buy them both?

IS THE CHAOS ENGINE...



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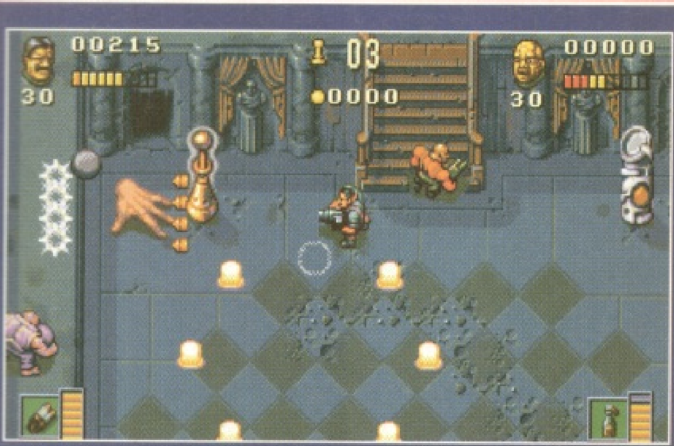
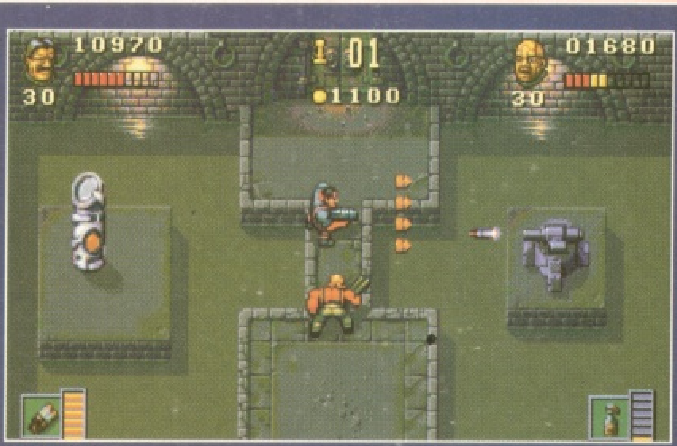


THE MANSION
Inside the mansion everything starts to get really bizarre. The puzzles start coming to the forefront of the action, and there are loads of strange switches and warps to experiment with. The mansion also plays host to the game's weirdest monster — a walking hand!



THE CELLARS
You're getting closer to the Chaos Engine now, and you can tell as the monsters become more mechanical as opposed to organic. The final confrontation with the Engine is an epic affair that lasts for ages — let's hope you spent all that cash you collected along the way wisely!

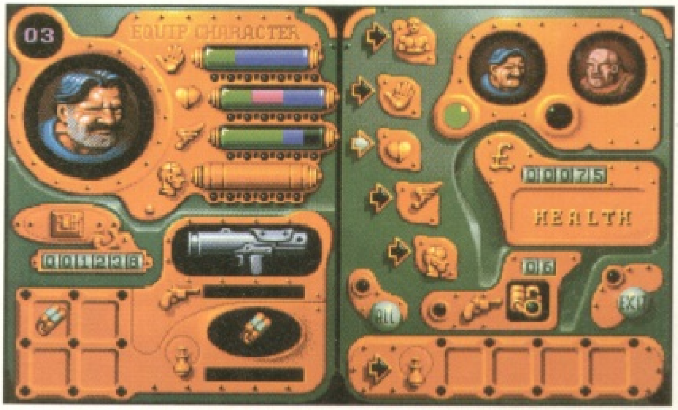
start to appear. These are well-designed 'action' puzzles, which tend to revolve around the player activating levers in the correct combination or shooting unusual wall designs that he might have spotted. While it's unlikely any of them will keep you stumped for long, at least they offe *something* for the brain to chew on and, even more importantly, they don't get in the way of the action, which would be criminal.

The Chaos Engine is a beautifully crafted piece of software. Everything about it is just so... *right*. The gorgeous, highly-detailed graphics convey the sense of a high-tech Victorian world perfectly. The sound, too, is excellent, from the rumbling explosions to the snatches of crystal-clear speech that inform you when a node has been activated or a power-up has been collected.

The action is perfectly judged, offering a stiff but not overwhelming challenge right from the off, then upping the difficulty at just the right rate. Rare amongst games of this type, The Chaos Engine really does reward skill, wit and observation — certainly, players who blunder through the game with their brains in neutral and their autofire on won't get very far at all.

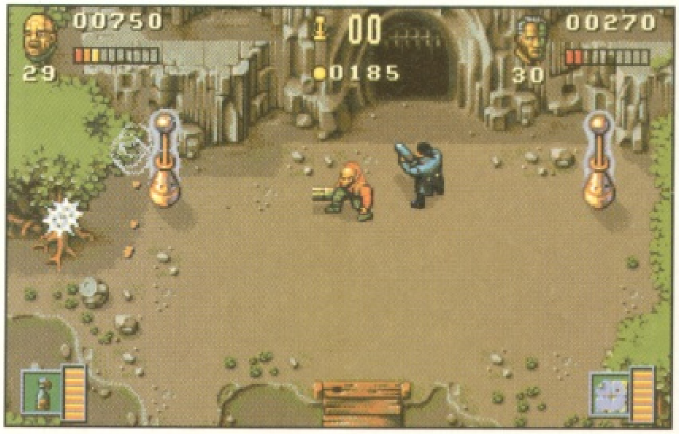
Although sixteen levels may not seem like much, The Chaos Engine is the sort of game you'll come back to time and time again — every time you play you'll always spot some little secret room or hidden bonus that you missed the first time around.

The icing on the cake is the marvellous intelligence of the CPU-controlled player, who actually behaves like a human player would — indeed, at times it's hard to believe you haven't got a mate sitting next to you. The clever thing about him is that although he helps out, he never dominates the action — for example, while he'll activate nodes, shoot nasties and collect treasure, he won't open secret rooms or solve puzzles for you.

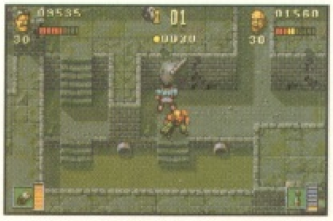


(Left) The shop appears after every second level. Here players can spend all that hard fought-for cash on 'specials', upgrades for their weapons and enhancements to their strength, speed and intelligence stats.

(Below) With a blast from his gun the Thug activates the final node, and the gateway to the next level opens.
(Bottom) One of TCE's lesser puzzles — the way ahead is flooded, but shooting that lever on the wall nearby will drain the water away.



Played alone or with a friend, this has to rate as THE best two-player game on the PC, and is a strong contender for the best PC action game of all time. PC gamesplayers reared on complex flight sims and RPGs might think that this sort of thing isn't for them but give it a try — I assure you you'll be pleasantly surprised.



THE CHAOS ENGINE

RENEGADE/BITMAP BROTHERS
(071) 481 9214
£TBA OUT NOW

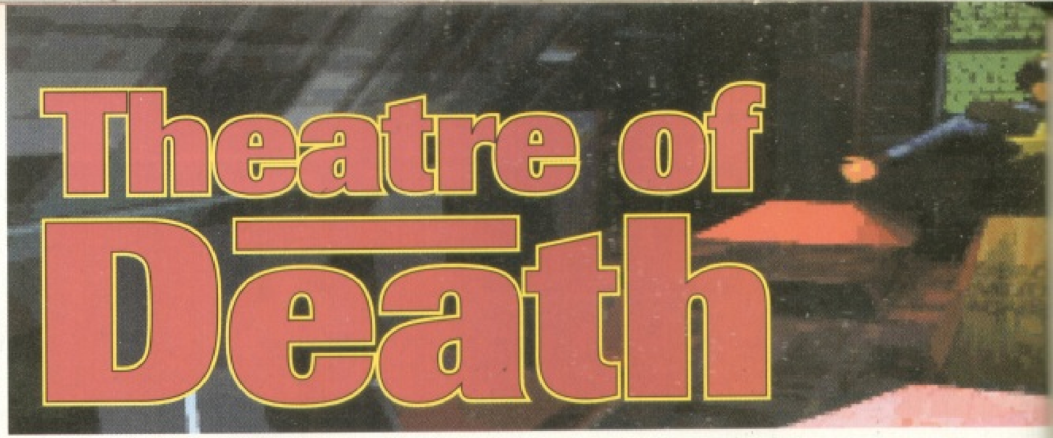
MINIMUM SPEC
25MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM and 2Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS
Joystick; Sound Blaster and Adlib soundcards.

THE GOOD...
- The best two-player action around — even if you happen to be playing on your own!
- A true 'thinking man's' shoot-'em-up that requires brains as well as brawn.
- Lush graphics full of character and atmosphere.
- Excellently meaty sound effects and superb digitised speech.

...AND THE BAD
- Tough challenge, but even so the game's a little on the short side.

OVERALL
90%



Theatre of Death

Special Forces Agent Alex Fraser discovers there's less to this Cannon Fodder clone than meets the eye.

It happens all the time. Take a successful and original game from the competition, then produce something along the same lines, adding supposed improvements which turn out to be either inconsequential to the gameplay or actually smother whatever it was that made the first game such a hit.

Theatre Of Death is a case in point. As you can see from the screenshots, this is a game that takes much of its inspiration from Sensible Software's Cannon Fodder, with the idea being to point-and-click your little squaddie sprites around a scrolling landscape while taking pot-shots at enemy troops, enemy buildings, enemy everything.

Instead of being a sort of Tour Of Duty, Isolated-Platoon-In-Hostile-Territory-With-Booby-Traps-And-Soldiers-Popping-Out-Of-The-Shrubbery shoot-'em-up, Theatre Of Death alleges to possess a strategic element. Sometimes you have to handle two squads at once, steering one into battle while leaving the other to patrol their area or defend their position. On occasions, you can call up air strikes or reinforcements. But for the most part you march the boys over to where the map says the baddies are, then shoot it out until one of the two armies is completely wiped out.

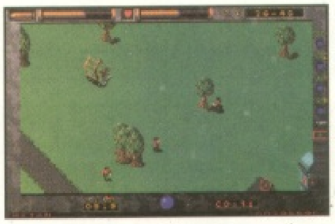
The gung-ho action is made more interesting by the promise of big weapons and enemy-smashing vehicles. After guns and grenades you progress to rocket launchers and dynamite when you have to flatten buildings and enemy airforces. After completing the first couple of missions you even get to scoot around in tanks, helicopters, armoured personnel carriers and jetpacks(!). Sounds great, doesn't it? And great it could have been, but the fun is foiled by two fundamental flaws.

The mouse control system apes Cannon Fodder, but is seriously fiddly. Changing weapons or breaking up the squad relies on you clicking on the tiny individual soldier sprites with different mouse button combinations, a fiddly process which rarely works. Sometimes soldiers wander off on their own, and if one runs out of bullets in the heat of battle he'll be dead before you can switch him to grenades.

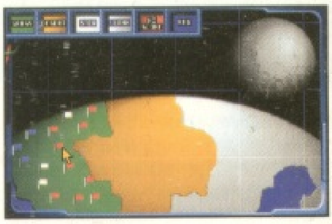
The other big problem is that the open-plan landscapes mean that instead of having short firefights you end up fighting pitched battles against whole gangs of troops, which your boys don't survive too well. The control problems make it difficult to stay on top of the action, especially as your fire has to be very accurate. Spraying bullets in the direction of the bad guys is ineffective – you have to plant the crosshair right on top of their heads to score a hit.

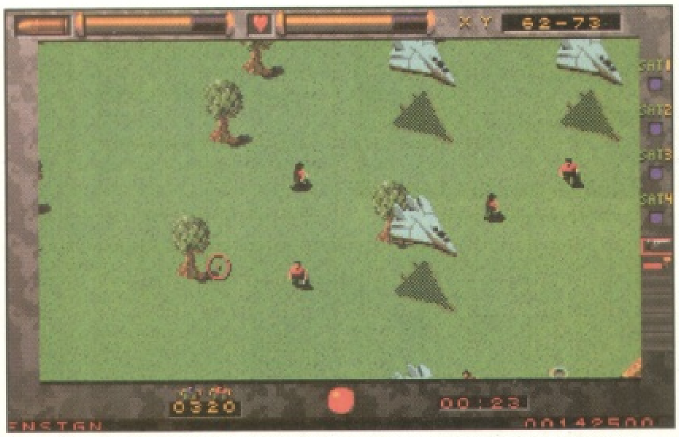
To top it all, your men are terribly fragile, losing all their energy in moments to bullets which you never saw. What all this results in is a game which may have a bit more to it than Cannon Fodder, but which I enjoyed about half as much. Cannon Fodder is lots of fun. This isn't. So which would you recommend if you were in my position?

(Below) Unfortunately the APCs aren't armed, but you can still have fun (quite a lot of fun, in fact) driving over enemy troops. But who'll be laughing when one grenade blows your armoured fun buggy to smithereens and barbecues all those within? Not you, matey, that's for sure.



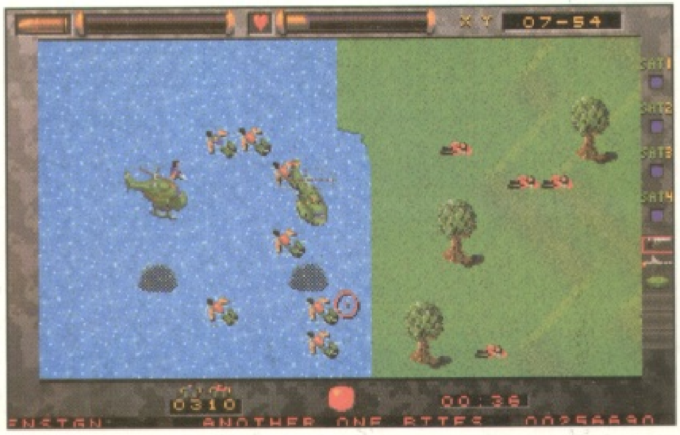
(Below) Battles are fought over four different terrains. You start in the grasslands on the left, colouring all the flags blue as you complete missions, then progress over deserts and snow, before blasting off for Moonbase Alpha, where there's no sign of Commander Koenig or his laser-firing staple gun.





(Above) The smart bombs in your armoury (so to speak) are airstrikes, which nuke the bad guys before they even get close, and troop reinforcements. HQ doesn't always authorise these requests, of course.

(Below) Cor! It's just like Apocalypse Now! Except worse.



THEATRE OF DEATH

Psygnosis/In-house

(051) 709 5755

£34.99 Out Now

MINIMUM **SPEC**

25MHz 386, VGA, 1Mb RAM, 7Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Roland and Gravis UltraSound soundcards.

*THE **GOOD...***

- Fair bit of variety and a good selection of vehicles to play with.
- At least it doesn't keep crashing.
- Most of the packaging is produced from recycled cardboard.

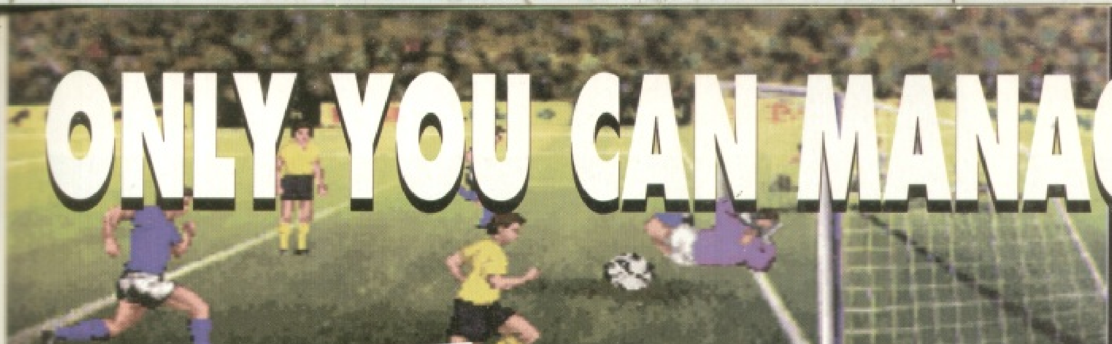
*...AND THE **BAD***

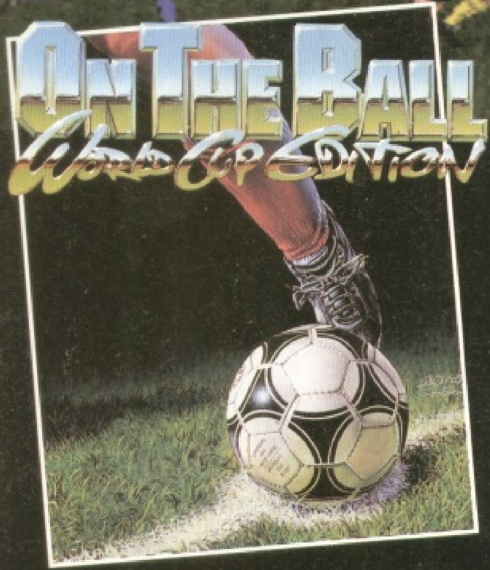
- Control is often too fiddly and cumbersome to allow you to keep up with the flow of events.
- It just isn't as much fun as Cannon Fodder, so you might as well buy that instead.

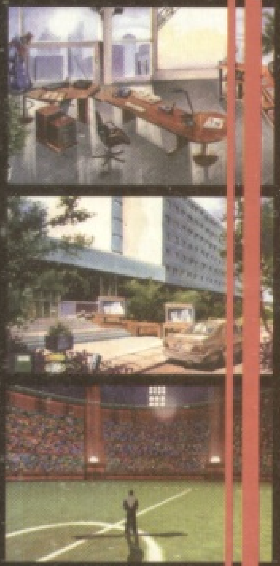
OVERALL

57%

ONLY YOU CAN MANAGE!





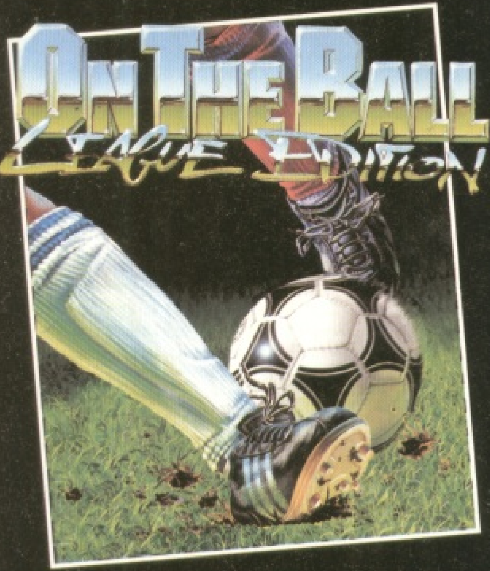


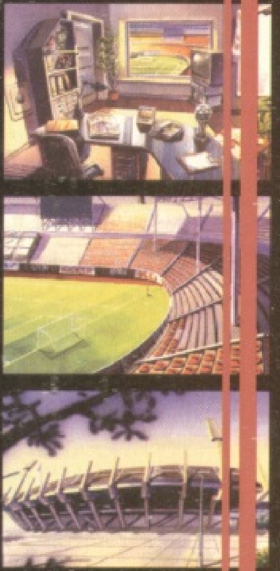
Stunning World Cup football management, you can even turn the clock back to the qualifiers, but this time you make sure England get through!

Featuring: Five difficulty levels: 1 - 4 players: full training sessions (18 styles): full World Cup programme, or start with qualifiers!: comprehensive editor for matches, groups, players etc.: group and individual pep-talks: strategy sessions: view your opponents matches: six playing styles: create your own weekly and daily schedule: animated match highlights: make in-match changes to team and playing style: in-match commentary (spoken on CD). And more!

Out: End June, PC, Amiga 1meg, Amiga 1200

COMING SOON





Combining meticulous detail and realism with sensational animated graphics and irresistible presentation, this game will inspire the football strategy genius in you.

Featuring: Unique digitised TV style match coverage: running commentary (spoken on CD): training seminars: sponsorship: home and foreign transfer lists: comprehensive data and statistics: team finances and morale: player and manager politics: expert opinions: press praise and criticism: cup conditions: uniquely accessible interface: 1 - 4 players. And still more!

Out: End August, PC, Amiga 1meg, Amiga 1200

EVERYTHING BEFORE WAS JUST TRAINING.

CD-ROM features both League and World Cup

ASCON

Daze Marketing. Tel: 071 328 2762

Sports

Dean Evans pretends his great great grandmother was born in Dublin as he tackles US Gold's official World Cup footy game.

World Cup

With the World Cup now in full swing across the Atlantic, the football-loving, telly-viewing millions are being bombarded by adverts for 'officially-licensed' products. McDonalds is the official burger supplier, Guinness is the official beer of the Republic Of Ireland team, Coke is the official, er, coke and no doubt there are probably officially-licensed USA '94 condoms, dishwasher powders and ratchet screwdrivers as well.

As for the PC football game, Birmingham-based US Gold has bagged the only comfy seat on the brand-label bandwagon and, with the release of its new game World Cup USA '94, you can take control of any of the 24 qualifying teams and attempt to lead them to the giddy, shirt-swapping heights of World Cup glory.

Apart from being able to take Saudi Arabia into the quarter finals, World Cup USA '94 also allows you to play friendly matches, hold practice sessions to perfect your gameplay and also features a whole range of in-game editors that enable you to change the teams, the colour of the kits, the draw, the formations and to construct your own individual special plays.

In fact, World Cup USA '94 probably has more options than the current range of instant hot chocolate drinks from Cadbury's. It's impressively comprehensive. Let's say, for example, you want to dive straight in and play the World Cup competition. After choosing your team, each of which have their own individual strengths and weaknesses, you can then choose to alter the speed of the game, select whether the goalkeepers are computer- or manually-controlled, adjust the amount of wind and so on. Your game can be as simple or as complicated as you want to make it.

In contrast, the kicking-about-the-football bit is rather less complex and, despite US Gold's claim that you can play the game as a fully-fledged soccer simulation, with it's icon-based menu system and frantic yet occasionally shallow gameplay, World Cup USA '94 has a overwhelming arcade feel to it.

Using a traditional top-down graphic viewpoint, the players are controlled with either keyboard, joypad or a two-button joystick. It's quite simple to get the hang of and as you don't have to remember complicated joystick waggles to initiate things like headers and bicycle kicks — they're done automatically — after a few minutes of experimentation you can be sliding into tackles and performing pitch acrobatics as if you'd designed the game yourself.

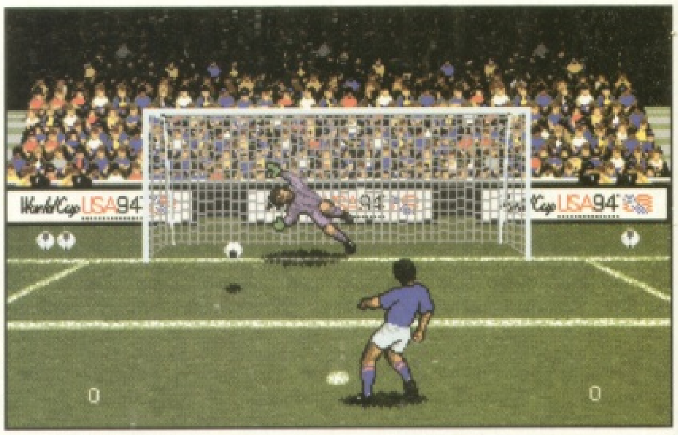
The football part has all the features you'd expect to find in a modern game including substitutions, injuries, bookings, extra time and penalty shoot-outs.

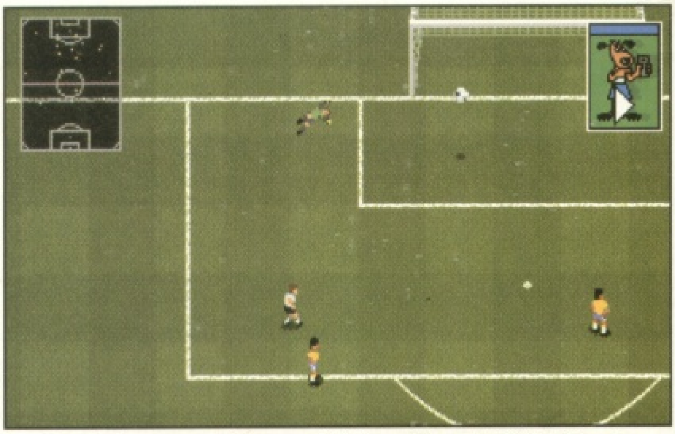
IT'S A BIT LIKE...

If it's arcade football action you're after, you ought to take time out from the barrage of TV coverage to have a look at EA's forthcoming FIFA International Soccer. Converted from the Mega Drive original, FIFA is a stunning arcade football game, featuring an isometric-3D view point, superb player animation and atmospheric sound. FIFA is detailed, very playable and, dare I say it, the PC GAMES hot tip for football glory this summer.

WORLD CUP USA '94?

OR HANG ON FOR FIFA SOCCER?

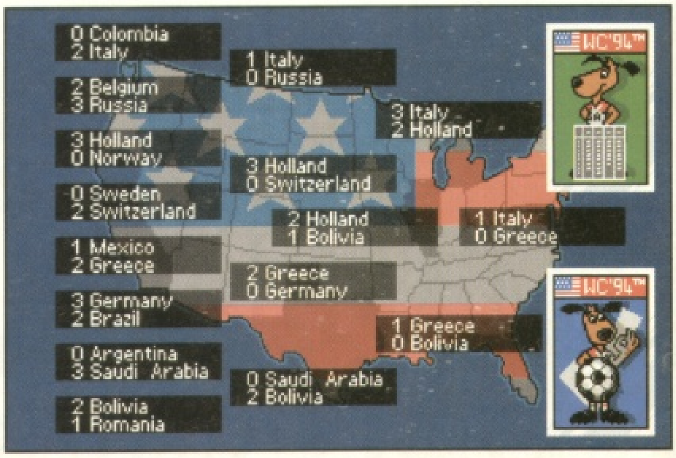




(Top) If you hack your opponent's legs away in the box or the game is still tied after extra time, the view switches to this rather pretty 2D penalty view.

(Above) As the instant replay shows, Des, the thundering left-foot shot hit the post and the young German number ten pounced and fired in the rebound past the stranded goalkeeper.

(Below) This years World Cup standings. Italy beat Greece in the final, I see. Yeah, right — like that's really going to happen.



0 Colombia
2 Italy

2 Belgium
3 Russia

3 Holland
0 Norway

0 Sweden
2 Switzerland

1 Mexico
2 Greece

3 Germany
2 Brazil

0 Argentina
3 Saudi Arabia

2 Bolivia
1 Romania

1 Italy
0 Russia

3 Holland
0 Switzerland

2 Greece
0 Germany

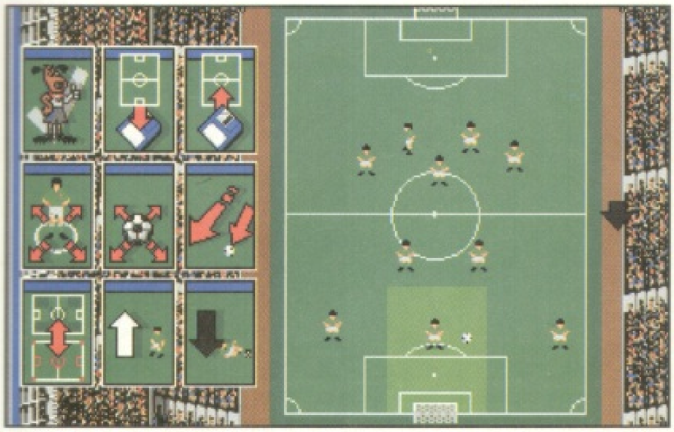
0 Saudi Arabia
2 Bolivia

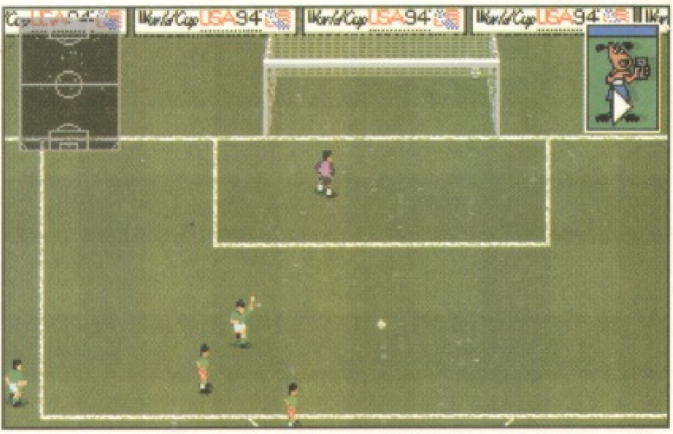
3 Italy
2 Holland

2 Holland
1 Bolivia

1 Greece
0 Bolivia

1 Italy
0 Greece





upUSA '94

One of the more inventive touches is the special play editor, which allows you to preset up to 15 individual set-piece moves, i.e free kicks, throw-ins, corners and penalties.

In a two-player game what this allows you to do is to add an element of unpredictability to the gameplay. For example, say you've been given a free kick just outside your opponents 16-yard box. You could either opt to kick it manually or, if you've preset a move for precisely this sort of situation, you can select that and let your players go through the motions.

"Yes, all this is very nice," you might be saying, "but I don't care if it's got 27 special moves or if I get a bendy Jack Charlton doll with it. What I want to know is: Is World Cup USA '94 any good?"

Well, sort of. There's no denying that on an arcade level the game is initially quite fun to play, but there are also some unforgivably horrible bits that annoyed me, frustrated me and generally spoilt my overall enjoyment of the game.

Firstly, the icon menu system is often confusing and laborious, while the preferred close-up view of the pitch means it's often difficult to string any sort of passing game together without straining one eye to peek at the pitch radar. As such, success on the field tends to involve more in the way of luck than any real skill with the football.

Secondly, the game's AI (artificial intelligence) is completely and totally crap. Most of the time the goalkeepers have the reflexes and the agility of an inflatable dinghy and as for the defenders, they have a tendency to stand around stupidly, ignoring the spherical white thing that rolls past them towards the goal.

But worse than this is the deadly, goal-poaching skill of the opposition forwards who, when faced with a stranded goal keeper and an open goal, will not kick the ball casually into the net but stumble and almost trip over it in their eagerness to nudge it behind for a goal kick.

Play for a while and you soon find that 'gameplay' translates to simply tapping the ball first time to the nearest player, running it up to the byline, knocking it sideways and then hoofing it (usually with a bicycle kick) into the top corner of the opposition's net.

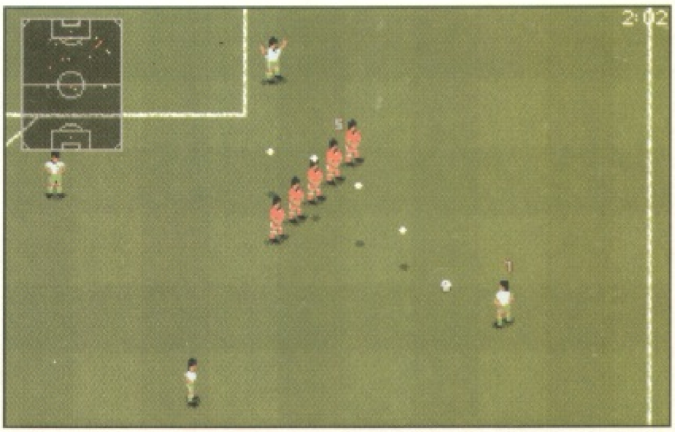
Taking all this into account, I'm not convinced how difficult World Cup USA '94 is and how much of a longterm challenge it offers. Admittedly both my teams were knocked out in the quarter final stages but I took the weak Saudi Arabia team there, beating Holland and Argentina along the way.

Although the animation of the players is excellent (they slide realistically into tackles, even hold their precious family jewels when they line up in a defensive wall) and the wealth of options is initially impressive, you soon find that the actual football part of World Cup USA '94, the bit that matters most, isn't really very exciting or satisfying.

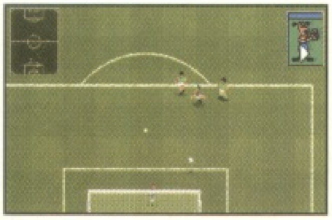
But considering the bad reputation the PC has when it comes to football games, World Cup USA '94 is neat, playable and isn't really that bad. If you want an arcade football game, my advice is hang around for EA's impressive FIFA International Soccer. A good football should have rampant playability poking out of its shorts and, sadly, World Cup USA '94, like poor England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, just doesn't quite make the grade.

(Above left) World Cup USA '94 is nothing if not flexible. From the copious options screens you can push your team forward, choose a defensive stance, change the team formation, alter the colour of the kits and even preset your own special moves.

(Above) And Ireland have scored!!! Cascarino thumps the ball into the back of the Mexican net and bounds away in celebration.



(Above) Taking free kicks is simple. Direct the arced, white line the right way and press Fire.



(Left) The players can perform acrobatic moves like diving headers and overhead kicks.

WORLD CUP USA '94

US GOLD/TIERTEX

(021) 625 3366

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM and 5Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; joypad; Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- An impressive range of options, including a nifty special play editor.
- Tidy, very neat graphics (if a little on the smallish side) with some good animation.

...AND THE BAD

- The close-up view makes stringing together any passes more a matter of luck than real skill.
- The game's artificial intelligence really sucks in a big way.
- The sound is pretty naff too.

OVERALL

76%

PC GAMES STAR

The Settlers

"Go away — I'm building a windmill!" said Dean Evans as we tried to drag him away from The Settlers.

For such a simple game, Blue Byte's The Settlers is a fiendishly difficult one to describe. I sat for hours in front of my PC — twiddling my thumbs, whistling, drinking coffee, wandering around the office aimlessly — trying to think of a good way to start.

Should I start by saying that it's a bit like Sim City 2000 or Populous? Perhaps I should jump right in and say that it's devilishly addictive? Hey, maybe I could get away with writing as little as possible and plonking a huge but very pretty piece-together map on the page?

At first glance, The Settlers seems to be ludicrously straightforward. Starting the game with nothing more than a surplus Disney fairytale castle, the idea is to build up a happy, thriving village of woodcutters, stonemasons, farmers, miners, fishermen and assorted artisans around it.

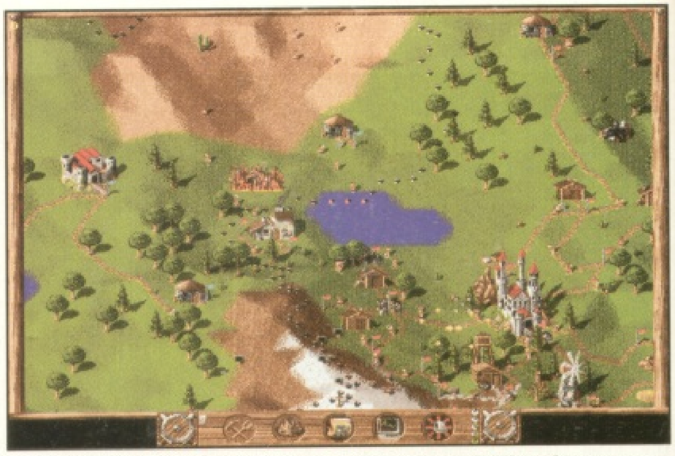
Once your fledgeling community has established a foothold you've then got to till the land, mine the hills, make pointy weapons, train a few knights and then ruthlessly beat up your neighbours and burn their buildings to the ground.

Once you've chosen a suitable site for your castle (somewhere with a lake, a mountain or two and some large rocks nearby is ideal) a boundary is erected marking out your territory.

Next you've got to select sites for those essential medieval services; the stonemason, woodcutter, fisherman and the forester to be exact, laying paths to connect them all to the castle — you need these guys to replenish your dwindling supplies.

Having planned your sites your little settlers then get down to work. An engineer prepares the land and as soon as the last plank is nailed down and the final stone dumped into place the woodcutters start wandering around chopping down trees, the foresters plant young saplings, the fishermen fish and the stonemasons hack away at rocks.

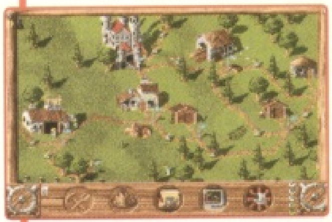
When the essential structures are in place it's wise to build a sawmill to process the felled trees. Next you could add a knight's hut to extend your boundaries or a toolmaker to improve your equipment. Then how about a farm? A coal mine or two? An armourer



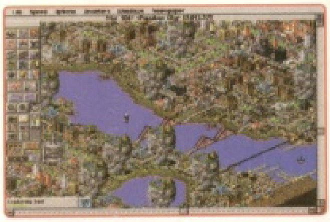
The Settlers isn't just about building rustic, wattle-and-daub style buildings, there are enemies about and where the two borders clash, like here, there's bound to be trouble.

IT'S A BIT LIKE...

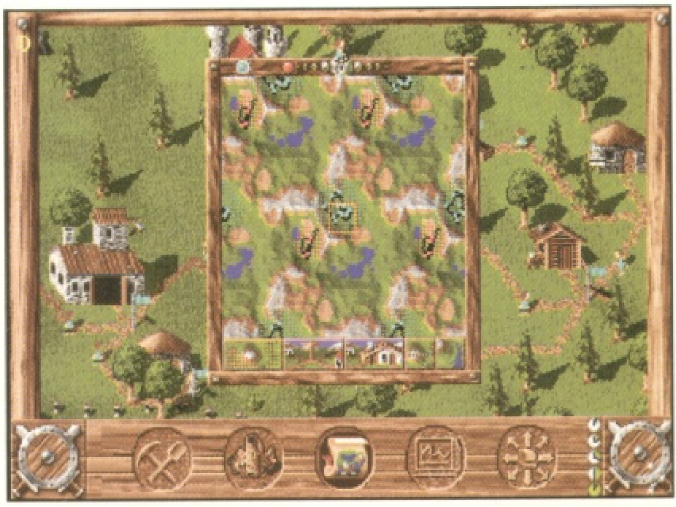
If it's god games you're after, The Settlers obviously bears comparison with Bullfrog's classic Populous and the Maxis smash, Sim City 2000 and, of the two, Sim City 2000 must be the runaway winner. Build up your small town into a thriving, polluted metropolis, juggle finances and fend off disasters. Apparently if you have a big enough city, Superman flies about putting out fires. Red cape, red underpants and everything. It's true, honest.



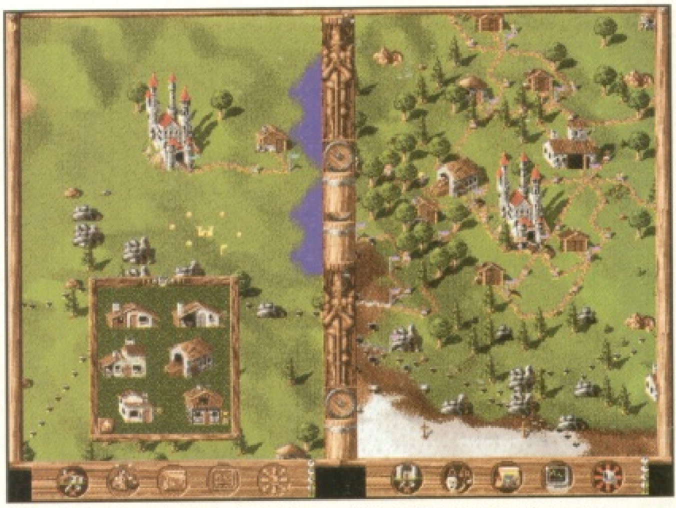
THE SETTLERS IS...



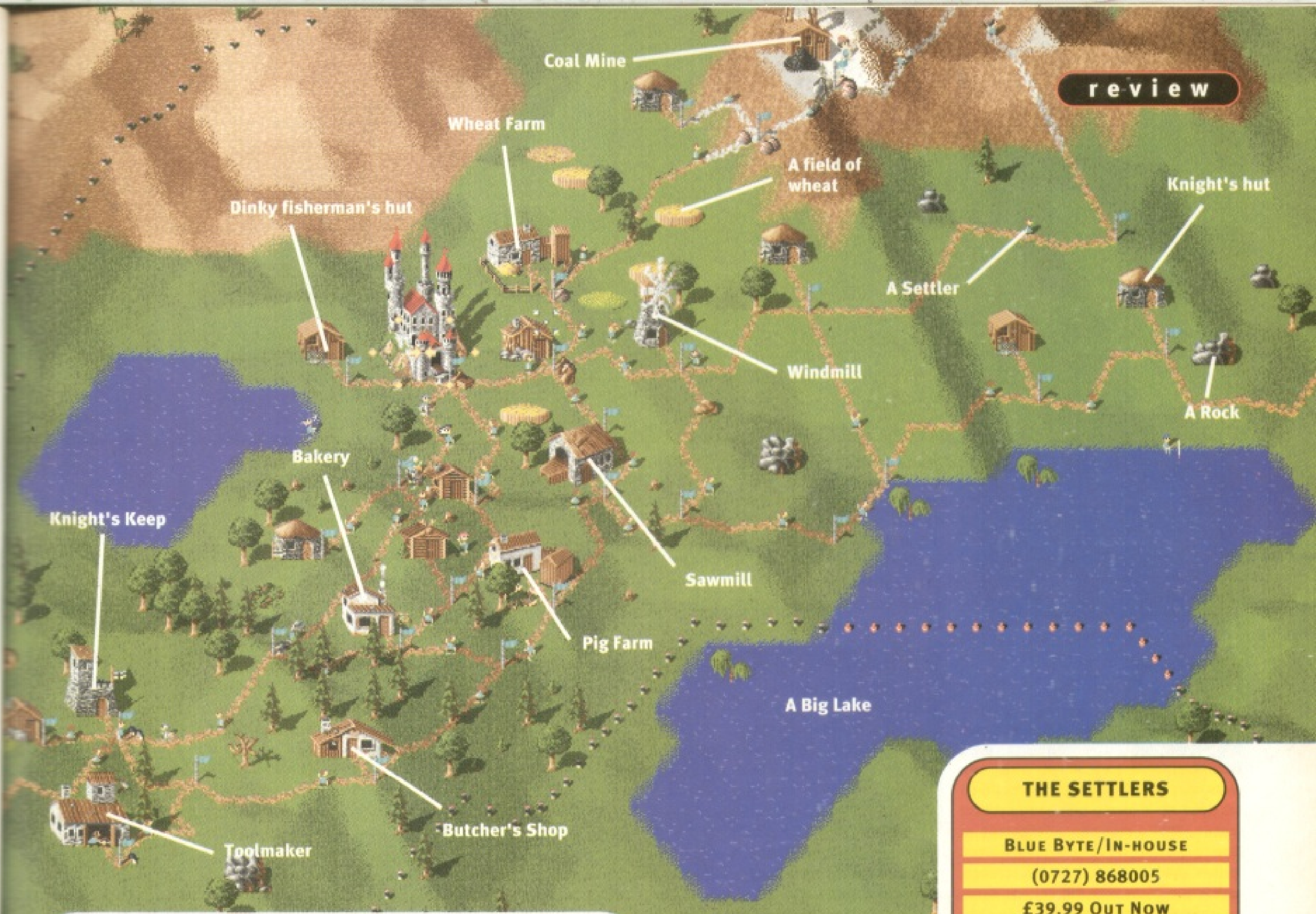
...A MEDIEVAL SIM CITY



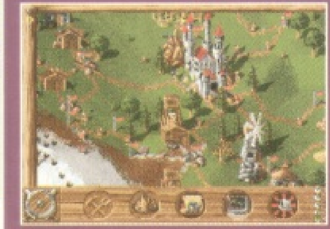
It's often handy to see how your enemy is getting along, so take a quick peek at the map.



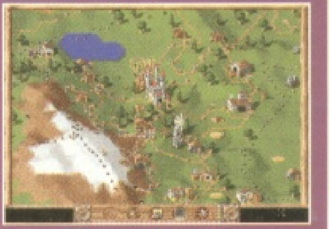
Not content with playing the computer? Play against a friend in the split-screen mode.



It's got an SVGA mode too...



Of course, you can play The Settlers in normal VGA mode, it looks very pretty...



...but you can also play it in glorious SVGA mode and see much more of the action.

to improve your weaponry perhaps? The list goes on and on.

In Settlers you can either hold your nose, shut your eyes and dive in at deep end, or alternatively play the six training scenarios. These are short missions that teach you the basic mechanics of how the different infrastructures work and how you should ideally link them together to make a thriving community.

For example, if you build a coal mine in the mountains you'll soon find that your miners won't work very fast if they aren't getting enough food. As the population expands the poor fishermen won't be able to cope with demand so you can diversify and build a wheat farm. Build a windmill and you can grind the wheat into flour. Finally build a bakery nearby and your miners can have fresh baguettes, bagels and loaves every morning.

Of course, playing The Settlers isn't just a case of watching your little blokes building their houses and farming their pigs (although a large amount of time *is* spent doing this) because while you're building up your village, the computer controlled enemy is doing the same.

Like Civilization and Populous, once you're strong and confident enough it's time to send in the knights to trash the opposition. Beat the enemy on the first mission and in the next you'll have two against you, then three. After that the little sods get more difficult to beat and what once was a cute little world builder slowly becomes a strategic nightmare.

But you can play The Settlers any way you choose. Obviously it's a big challenge to go up against three opponents, battling for that extra bit of space to build your goldsmith's shop, but if you want nothing more than a quiet, interactive screensaver-type experience, you can have that too.

But by far The Settlers' greatest strength is its beautiful animation. Play it for five minutes and you'll soon be lost for hours watching knights sword-fighting, fisherman diligently fishing in quiet lakes and geologists scouring the mountain ranges for rare gold deposits. Just on this level it's still thoroughly engaging, absorbing and involving.

Although it takes elements from both Populous and Sim City, The Settlers has none of the fiddly intricacies of either. I love this game, I really do, and it's very difficult to say anything bad about it at all... so I'm not going to. If you don't like world building/god-type games then obviously this may not be your beverage of dried leaves but if you do, The Settlers is the sort of game that will fill you with a warm, satisfying glow, a bit like having eaten two bowls of Ready Brek for breakfast on a cold October morning.

It's simply marvellous.

THE SETTLERS

BLUE BYTE/IN-HOUSE

(0727) 868005

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM and 6Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Mouse; joystick; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Pro Audio Spectrum soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- A game that's so cute you can just sit back and watch it for hours — in fact, it's quite relaxing.
- Not only can you watch it, you can build up your village and indulge in spurious medieval violence as well.
- Starts off nice 'n' easy, but gets really tough later on — and the difficulty curve is brilliantly judged.

...AND THE BAD

- Nothing to see here, move along. Nothing to see...

OVERALL

92%

David Upchurch gets all misty-eyed over Elite Software's blast from the past.

Dragon's Lair CD

Dragon's Lair? Oh yes, I remember Dragon's Lair. Even now, ten years on, I can still recall the first time I set eyes on it in my local amusement arcade. While most arcade games of time consisted of tiny, primary-coloured sprites wobbling around black screens, here was a game with full cartoon-quality animation and speech. It looked incredible and I, for the first time in my young life, was in love.

Unfortunately, my love affair ended the moment I actually played the game. As I lost life after life and coin after coin, I began to fear that my legendary game-playing skills had left me. It was only after I'd spent nearly all my pocket money in a futile attempt to get off the first screen, that I realised that it wasn't I who was at fault — it was the game.

You see, Dragon's Lair was never a game to be played, it was a game to be watched, impressed by and then avoided at all costs. And, unfortunately, the same is true of the Elite's new CD conversion.

Dragon's Lair stars Dirk the Daring, a bold if slightly gormless knight, who's on a mission to rescue Princess Daphne from the clawed clutches of Singe the Dragon. Trouble is, Singe lives deep within the bowels of a mysterious old castle, each room of which is full to the brim with magical traps and monsters.

The not-so-clever thing about Dragon's Lair is that it dispenses with that quaint, old-fashioned notion of 'gameplay' and replaces it with a dull memory cum reactions test.

Each room, you see, is basically a short animated sequence. As the sequence plays, you have to use your 'skill and judgement' to decide when to intervene and give the hero a nudge in the right direction to help him survive. Make the wrong choice at the wrong moment — or the wrong choice at the right moment, for that matter — and he'll die. Get it right, on the other hand, and the sequence continues.

However, although there are only five possible control options — move up, down, left or right, or use the sword — the sequences happen so fast and are often so confusingly depicted that success typically relies more on trial and error than any actual skill.

However, once you know the right key presses to make and the right time to make them, each sequence is a tediously-dull breeze. Oh, the game occasionally 'flips' a sequence, so it plays in reverse, but that doesn't add much challenge or interest. And since you have an infinite number of 'continues', you can easily complete the game in a couple of hours or so.

Yes, Dragon's Lair looks pretty — although the images are grainy at times — and it sounds quite nice, but as a game it stinks. If you're that desperate to watch a cartoon, why not buy a Simpsons video?

(Below) Dirk the Daring discovers that a friend has bought him Dragon's Lair for his birthday.

DRAGON'S LAIR CD

ELITE/READYSOFT

(0922) 55852

£44.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM and CD-ROM drive.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Joystick; Sound Blaster soundcard.

THE ***GOOD...***

- Since it was created by a team of talented professional animators, Dragon's Lair is very entertaining to watch...

...AND THE ***BAD***

- ...But it's not even remotely entertaining to play.
- FMV is very grainy and even ugly in places.
- Painful to play on anything less than a decent 486 with a double-speed CD drive.

OVERALL

17%

David Upchurch finds true love in United Pixture's debut.

Plumber's Don't Wear Ties ^{CD}

Slamming your fingers in a car door? Yeah, that's pretty bad. Losing a loved one? Hell, that's worse. Being told you have but a few short weeks left to live? Jeepers, the pits. But as bad as all the above are, none of them are worse than Plumber's Don't Wear Ties.

It's essentially a photolove story on CD, akin to the sort of thing teen mags like Jackie and My Guy used to print — you know: boy meets girl, boy loses girl, etc, etc. Or in PDWT's case: boy meets girl, girl goes for job interview, girl gets chased by lecherous would-be boss, boy rescues girl, boy and girl ride off on a motorbike and, er, that's it.

The twist is that you can affect how the story develops. At key points in the plot, an intensely irksome 'story host' pops up and offers you a set of possible plot branches, of which only one is correct. Trouble is, the choices are such that it's all rather subjective as to which is right and which is wrong — not that it really matters, because even if you do foul up you can go back and try again. Unfortunately, of course, this leniency means that you can finish the game in one sitting, provided you have an hour or so to kill.

This might not be so bad if the 'plot' (if you can call it that) was even vaguely entertaining, but it's not. The acting is truly awful, the stabs at humour are pathetically unfunny and the grand finale, an unamusing Benny Hill-style chase around the less scenic parts of Los Angeles, goes on *forever*.

This may sound like one of those games that's so bad it's funny but, really, it isn't — it's just a criminal waste of your time and money. In fact, I only marked it as high as I have to leave some room in case — God forbid! — anything worse should ever appear.

PLUMBER'S DON'T WEAR TIES ^{CD}

UNICA/UNITED PIXTURES

(061) 429 0241

£29.00 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

33MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM and CD-ROM drive.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Any Windows-compatible soundcard.

THE GOOD...

- It's over quite quickly, which is some kind of plus-point.

...AND THE BAD

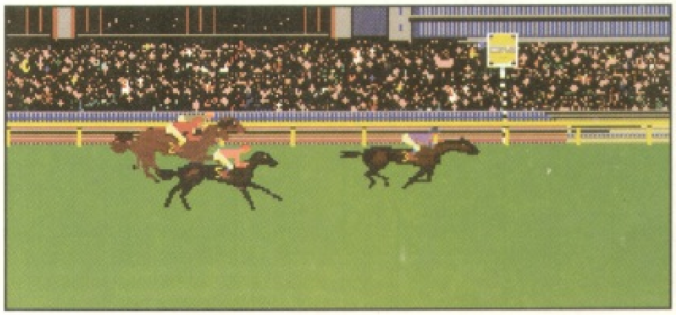
- Can I have a seperate piece of paper, please?

OVERALL

4%

Alex Fraser zooms past the post with New Era's horsey game

Good to Firm



While footy fans seem to get a new game released for them every month, lovers of horse racing have been pretty badly served when it comes to computerised adaptions of their favourite sport. Thankfully, however, here's New Era Software with Good To Firm, a game that more than compensates for that deficit.

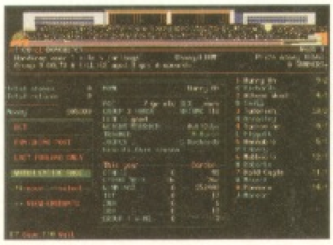
It's a sort of flat racing management game, in which the player assumes the role of a stable owner. Starting from scratch with severely limited funds, it's your aim to build the most successful stable within the time frame of one racing season — just 24 weeks.

GOOD TO FIRM

Obviously, your first task is to buy some nags to populate your empty stable. At the local auction you can survey the horses on offer, inspect their lineage and then make suitable bids, raising them accordingly as rival stable owners make their counter-bids.

After a bit of training, your horses will be ready for a day at the races. Again, there are more decisions to be made here, such as which jockey to hire and which races to enter. If you want, you can even have a flutter at the bookies! The races themselves are fully animated, complete with horizontal scrolling and even parallax. You can watch whole races, while impatient types can skip to the finishing line to get the results.

This brief overview can't even begin to hint at the GTF's sheer comprehensiveness — there are stacks of options available, which give the player a real feeling of control and that there's plenty to do. In fact, the only (and rather obvious) criticism of the game is that it's unlikely to appeal to anyone who doesn't have a deep and abiding love of the 'sport of kings'. For those that do, however, this should prove to be a clear favourite.



GOOD TO FIRM

NEW ERA/WIZARD GAMES

(031) 333 4958

£24.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

25MHz 386, VGA and 580K.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Er, nothing.

THE GOOD...

- As authentic and comprehensive a flat racing management sim as you could ask for...

...AND THE BAD

- ..But were you asking for one?

OVERALL

78%

review

Robinson's Requiem

Alex Fraser dons stout shoes and ventures out into Silmarils' survival sim.

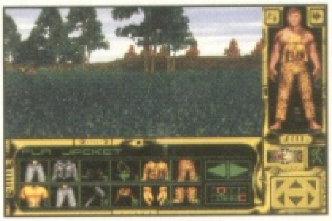
I hate going out for country walks. For a start, there's all that walking, which is very hard on the feet, not to mention the shoes — and shoes aren't cheap these days. Then it could be raining or snowing, or you could get struck by lightning, or be savaged by a mad bull or a mad farmer, or take a wrong turn and get combine harvested.

Believe me, just setting foot through a five-bar gate is a dangerous business these days, so it's lucky that modern computer technology allows us all the pleasures of going for a country walk with none of the perils. Case in point: Robinson's Requiem.

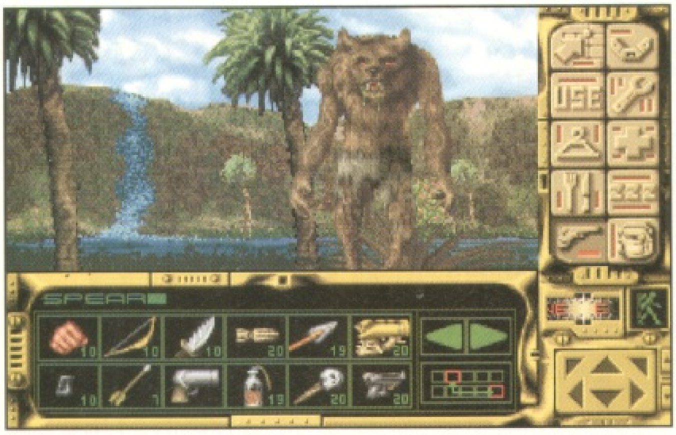
This rough terrain adventure uses remarkably realistic Voxel Spaced 3D graphics, clever lighting and weather effects and a dose of simulated rough living to make a weekend's play feel like a weekend spent crossing the Pennine Way with the Territorial Army, all the while being chased by a pack of bloodthirsty tigers.

Of course, that's not quite the intention. The story goes that you're a government space agent (the eponymous Robinson) who has, for some reason, fallen out of favour with his spymasters. As the game begins, Robbo is on his way to reconnoitre an unknown planet, little knowing that the mission is really a trap.

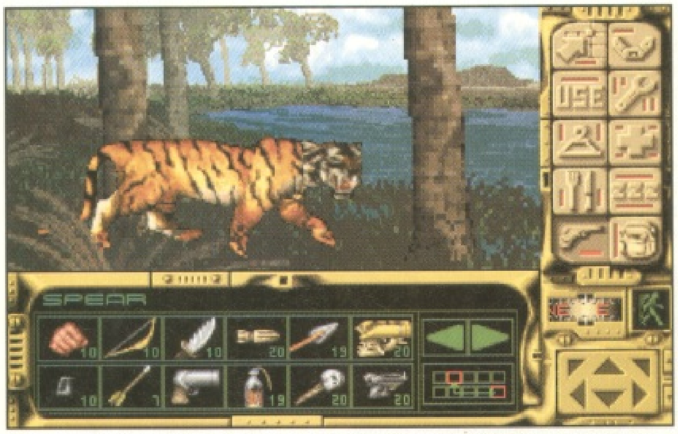
As his ship approaches the planet a malfunction sends it into a flat spin and he's forced to eject. He lands in a grassy valley and, with only his space agent's cunning and whatever he can find or make, he has to get himself out of his predicament.



The medical scanner marks broken limbs, and diagnoses all kinds of life-threatening illnesses. Good job you've got a bag full of every medicine ever, eh?



As if coughs, sneezes and assorted other diseases weren't enough to contend with, you also have to battle werewolves. What's the betting you didn't pack any silver bullets, eh?



The tiger — one of several which roam the first level. If he gets a whiff of you, you've had it. You could, however, try placing a snare in front of him. But it wouldn't stop him when he charges at you, so it's best just to leave him alone.

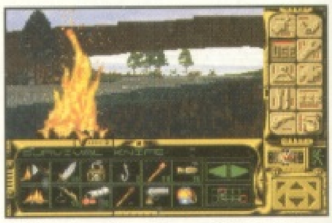
As he progresses it becomes apparent that he's on a prison planet where all the old agents get dumped, and if Robinson is to find a way off-world he has first to hike around the three simulated square miles of landscape, find all the other agents and pinch their ID cards so that he can deactivate the force fields surrounding the place.

So, you start the game dumped in the middle of this valley with only the clothes you're standing in and the SESAME computer, which auto-maps the landscape and keeps track of your health. Down the side of the screen is an array of command icons which gives you access the map and the body scanner, as well as inventories of different types of objects, which you can use and even combine to make new items.

Manipulating objects is very easy; just click on an object in the central 3D window to pick it up or search it for something useful. The computer then automatically calls up the correct inventory panel, so you can keep your weapons or your food or your clothes together in their own displays.

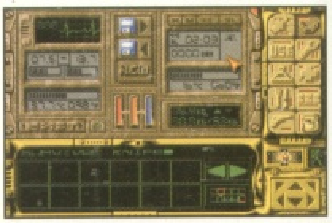
Walk around the first level for a while and you'll discover a few fruit trees, a lake, a waterfall, lots of mountains which you can't climb, then a couple of blokes, one of whom turns nasty and tries to stab you, while the other turns into a werewolf and tries to eat you.

Fortunately, defending yourself is simple, at least to start with, and bad guys are felled with a few stabs at the punch icon or even less stabs with a survival knife. As you progress you get to build bows and arrows (a few bits of stick, a cord and some feathers do the trick), spears and Molotov Cocktails, but you need to hunt around flare guns and laser pistols. Ranged weapons are essential, though, because tigers and dinosaurs block the way on the later stages and they aren't easily subdued by a knuckle sandwich.



Ah! There's nothing like a roaring fire for boiling your drinking water. Gives it a taste of the country, you know. Now, if only I had some sausages. Or marshmallows.

(Below) The SESAME computer allows you to keep a constant check on your body's health. You can also SAVE and LOAD from here.



One of the more interesting aspects of Robinson's Requiem is that it instead of having the sort of puzzles you would expect in this sort of game (finding the right keycard to put in the right door — that sort of thing), the problems here are almost all ones of survival — finding food, making sure it's safe to eat, killing hostile creatures, tending your wounds and staying warm and dry.

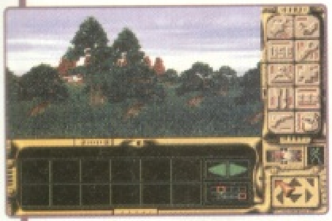
So, send Robinson to sleep in the rain or in a cold cave with wet clothes on, and he'll wake up the next morning sneezing and with a sore throat, the first symptoms of flu. Illnesses can eventually kill Robinson off if you don't treat them. He can catch sunstroke if he spends too much time in the sun without a hat, food poisoning if he doesn't boil water before drinking it, or malaria if he starts hanging around swamps.

He sees stars and keels over if you keep him going for too long without food. He breaks limbs if he falls down mountains, and if a fractured limb starts turning gangrenous, well, you can always amputate.

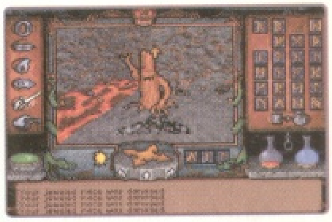
Probably the most impressive feature of Robinson's Requiem is the evi-

IT'S A BIT LIKE...

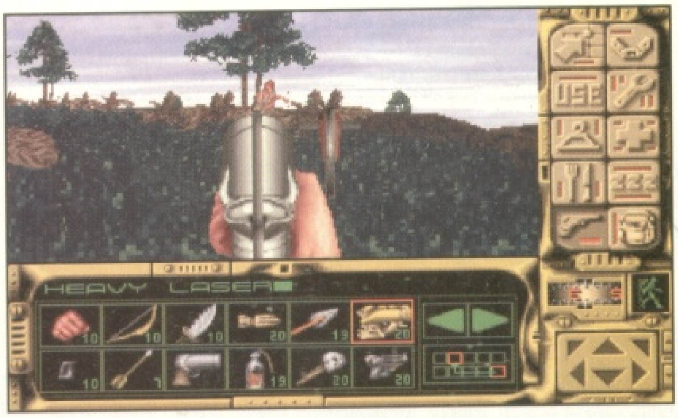
The free-roaming environment and the player-friendly combat and inventory systems give this the feel of an open-plan Ultima Underworld, though that's a very favourable comparison as RR's gameplay doesn't have anywhere near the depth of Ultima's. Still, the system has potential — maybe Silmarils will get it right with its next game using this engine?

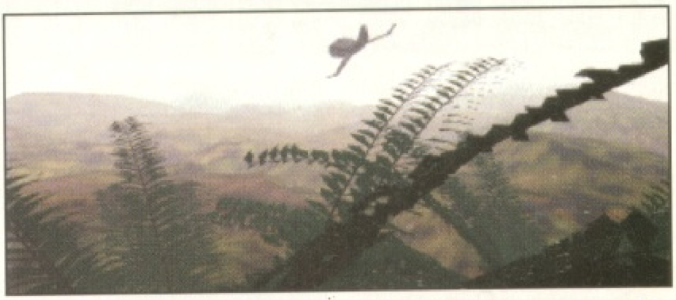


ROBINSON'S REQUIEM



ULTIMA UNDERWORLD





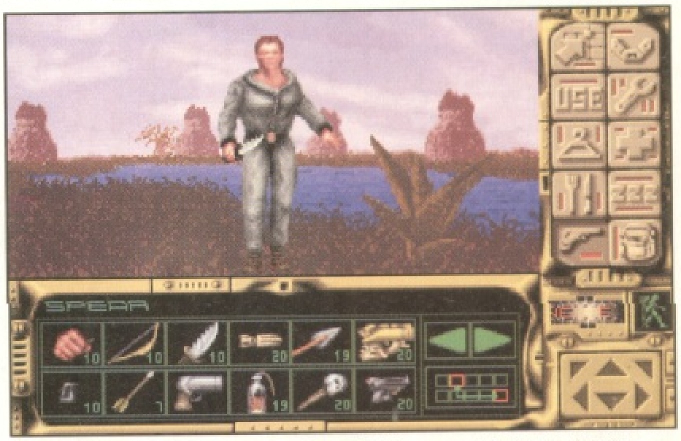
dent effort that has gone into making things authentic. These screenshots might make the scenery look chunky and pebble-dashed, but when you're moving through it, stumbling up mountain paths or crossing land bridges, it does all look quite realistic. In the background you get crickets chirping and distant, sinister roars coming through the Sound Blaster. As time passes the sun sets and night falls, and when the rain starts, memories of that holiday in the Brecon Beacons come roaring back.

It's a bit too easy to get Robinson killed, though, and that's probably the game's main ointment/fly combination. With all those maladies besetting him at every turn, the Robster often pops his clogs completely by surprise, with only the 'Game Over' screen informing you that he died of 'Uncontrollable haemorrhaging'. Well, he might have said something! What — are you supposed to check the medical scanner every two minutes? Couldn't he have said 'Ow! I'm bleeding to death!'?

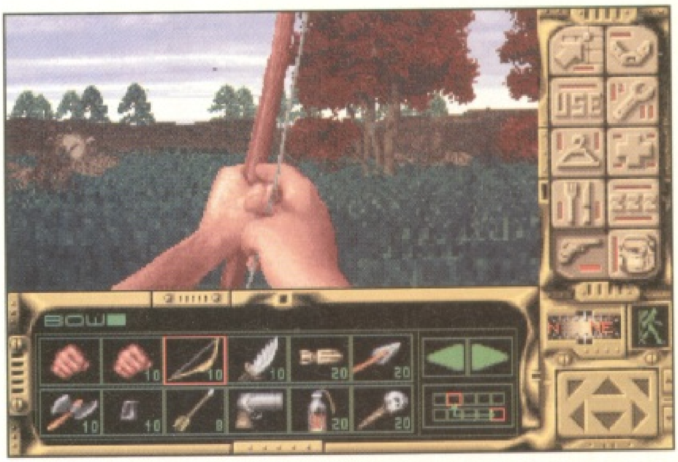
Compounding this problem is the ease with which you can send Robinson off mountains and smash his head in. When you're close to one, that lovely, brown-and-black-pixelly Voxel Spacing can make a dip or gully look completely flat, or at least not deep enough to cause plumetting death. And moving around in the dark or in a rain storm is only for those with a death wish.

It would have been good if some movement intelligence had been programmed in, not just to make Robinson realise he's about to walk over a cliff but also to help spot paths through the scenery. Some routes don't appear to be there until you check the map and walk your little marker through them, while Robinson often gets stuck on what looks like a flattish stretch of ground and you have to keep nudging him in different directions to free him.

In spite of its annoying faults there's no denying that there are some admirable concepts in Robinson's Requiem. For one thing, a wide open Voxel Spaced 3D environment seems a great setting for an RPG like this and, if we're lucky, someone with a slightly better game design will pick up on Robinson's Requiem, correct the flaws and give us a truly spectacular game by this time next year.



In case you were wondering about alternatives to fighting, you can't talk to the planet's denizens, though they occasionally talk AT you using a stilted dialect which probably owes a lot to whoever translated the original French text into English.



Manufacturing your own items is almost a game in itself. Highlight some likely components, click 'OK' and — hey presto! — more junk. Try putting sticks and feathers together to get arrows, or tying a piece of wire to a stick to get a snare. They'll come in handy.

ROBINSON'S REQUIEM

SILMARILS/IN-HOUSE

(071) 328 2762

£TBA OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM and 9Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Mouse; joystick; Sound Blaster soundcard.

THE GOOD...

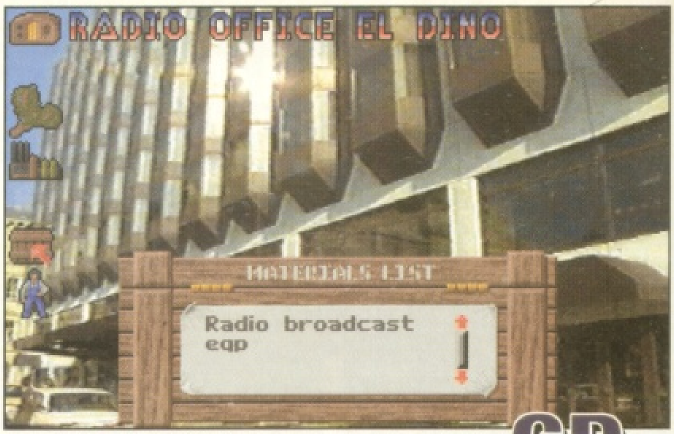
- Good graphics and sound combine to create a very authentic environment.
- Nice player interface makes the game surprisingly easy to get into.
- All credit to the designers for some original ideas.

...AND THE BAD

- Very easy to get killed off just because of a lapse in concentration.
- Negotiating the terrain often proves troublesome.
- Ultimately rather annoying.

OVERALL

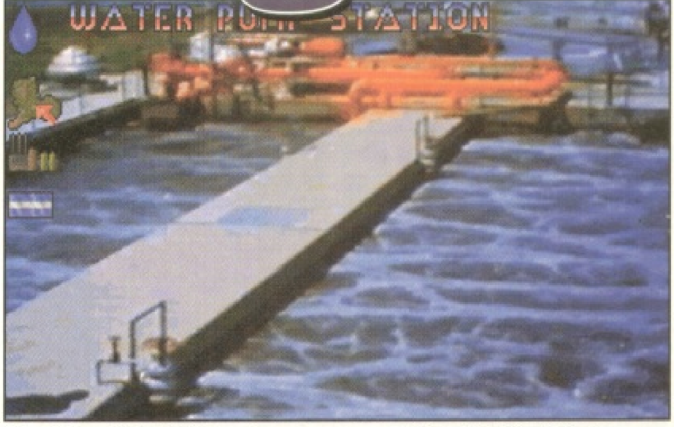
71%



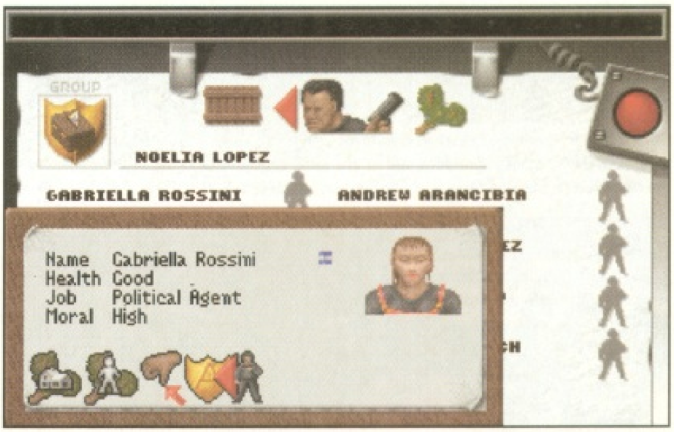
Radio broadcast
eqp

Central Intelligence CD

You say you want a revolution? Wee-eell, you know, here's David Upchurch reviewing a game that doesn't quite change the world.



(Above) One of Central Intelligence's many, many, *many* digitised stills illustrating the island's locations. As you can see, they're a bit... er... crap.
(Below) Each agent specialises in either generating propaganda, political manoeuvring or military strategising, and it's up to you to use them most effectively.



NOELIA LOPEZ
GABRIELLA ROSSINI
ANDREW ARANCIBIA

Name Gabriella Rossini
Health Good
Job Political Agent
Moral High

If you ever want to start a revolution, you'd better count me out. This game has left me feeling that I couldn't organise a revolution on a fully-automated belt-drive turntable. I've been playing Central Intelligence on and off now for well over a week and I'm getting nowhere. But I won't lay my troubles on you until later in the review. For the moment, let's concentrate on the troubles on sunny, sandy, seditious Sao Madrigal.

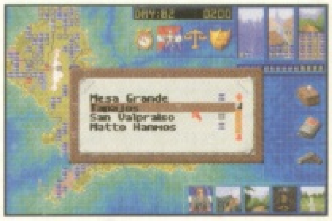
Until a couple of days ago, everything on this fictional Caribbean island was coming up roses. Large deposits of oil had been discovered, courting massive investment from The West, which resulted in a massive cash injection for the local economy. But just when everybody was getting really happy this bloody dictator staged a bloody coup, installed a police state, then seized all Western assets and fixed up some new trade agreements with China. Tsk — some people, eh?

The population seem to be an easily-led bunch and the majority of them are behind him, having been brainwashed by his anti-Western propaganda ('Citizens! John Wayne never rode his own horse! The Big Country was crap!'). It's your job to help shove the sheep back into the democratic fold, working with the deposed, democratically-elected President, and co-ordinating the operation of covert agents, guerilla leaders, student radicals and anyone else who can be rallied to the cause. The end result, hopefully, will be the eviction of El Presidente and the re-installation of Senor Nice Guy.

As the game starts, the new government's domination is restricted to the north of the island, and the rest of the countryside is mainly neutral, but as time passes the government forces spread, taking control of every town and village on the map, executing or imprisoning rebel sympathisers wherever they find them. Without any ado, you need to deploy your nine-strong teams of propaganda agents, political agents and military agents to strategic locations around the island.

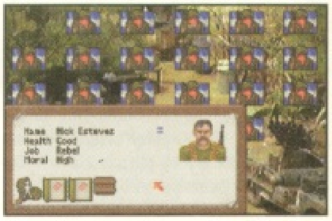
Each type of agent has his or her own particular skills. Propaganda agents deal with locating media resources and broadcasting the message of the revolution, political agents gather information by spying, and military agents do the assassinating and exploding.

The methods are realistic enough. Pilfer weapons and medical supplies to keep your brothers in the guerilla army happy. Steal equipment to broadcast your propaganda and tap phones. Make contact with sympathetic citizens in useful positions, or threaten the undecided into your way of thinking, then get them to let you use their printing press-



Mesa Grande
Espanjos
San Valpraiso
Matto Hannos

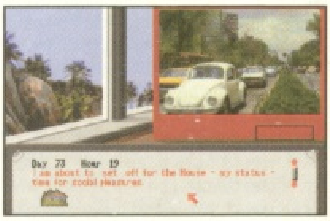
(Above) Navigating your way around the island's dozens of location is made easier by this menu, which will zoom you straight to any of the places you select.



Name Nick Estevez
Health Good
Job Rebel
Moral High

(Above) Ah, my proud, strong boys! You have a small army of rebels under your control, who you can use to make terror strikes against key Government-held buildings.

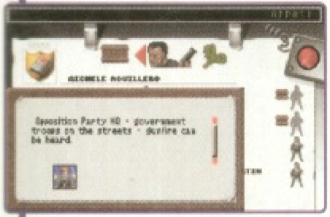
(Below) "Here's a Volkswagen Beetle I saw on my holiday in Sao Madrigal. It was blown up shortly after I took this, you know..."



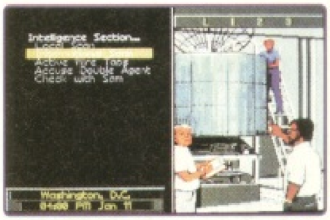
Day 73 Hour 19

IT'S A BIT LIKE...

The nearest game I've played to this one is MicroProse's Covert Action. Designed by Sid Meier, it has the player piecing together clues, decoding messages, jetting around the world and even throws in a few entertaining action and puzzle sequences. The strategy element isn't as huge as Central Intelligence's but the gameplay is much more accessible.



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE



COVERT ACTION

es, or their radio or television equipment to get your side of the story across. If your agents pick up any information on government officers having illicit affairs then that might be good for a bit of blackmail, too.

All this sounded like ripping stuff to me, and so rubbing my hands with glee, I slipped the CD into the drive and got set for hours of anti-establishment action. As soon as the game started I ran into my first stumbling block — the player interface.

It's not that the interface is terrible, because it does make an effort to present you with the correct icons you need at the correct time. But because of the sheer volume of possible actions you can take it can all get very confusing very quickly. Even more confusing is the way that some actions you think you should be able to take in a given situation you're occasionally denied access to — and it's often not very clear why. Ocean has kindly provided two 'interactive' tutorials and, while they're quite good and easy-to-follow, they're quite limited and don't really give you that much insight into the mechanics of the 'real' game.

Eventually, after much head-scratching and confusion, I started to make some headway — but not much. There are so many things happening in Central Intelligence that keeping track of EVERYTHING is literally impossible. You're plonked right in the middle of this fast-developing scenario, and keeping on top of its many twists and turns is nightmarishly difficult. While this may all be very realistic as far as a simulation goes, it doesn't make for that enjoyable a game.

Agents are logging reports constantly, but you don't know about them until you access their screen, and then they're at least a day old so whatever action there was, you've missed it. And there are so many names and people to keep track of! Of course, you don't need to memorise the identities of all 1,360 simulated people on the island, which is just as well because I had trouble just remembering what I'd got my agents up to, and where.

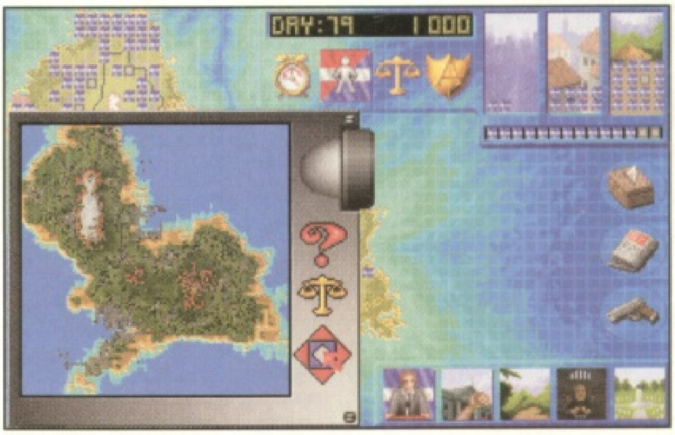
One of the key features of Central Intelligence is that it's meant to be completely free-wheeling and open-ended. You don't get specific targets in specific time scales. Plot developments don't happen on pre-determined days. I suppose that's supposed to make it more realistic, but all it actually does is make you wonder what you're supposed to do next. After all, it's a big island, and there are over 1300 people on it. Sometimes you need a bit of guidance, but you don't get it.

The other problem with such freedom is that, by default, there are no real 'sub-goals' to achieve, just the overall one. When playing a game I like to be rewarded with the odd juicy carrot every now and then just to make me feel that I'm doing well, that I'm getting somewhere. Unfortunately, Central Intelligence doesn't — and, to be fair, can't — offer them.

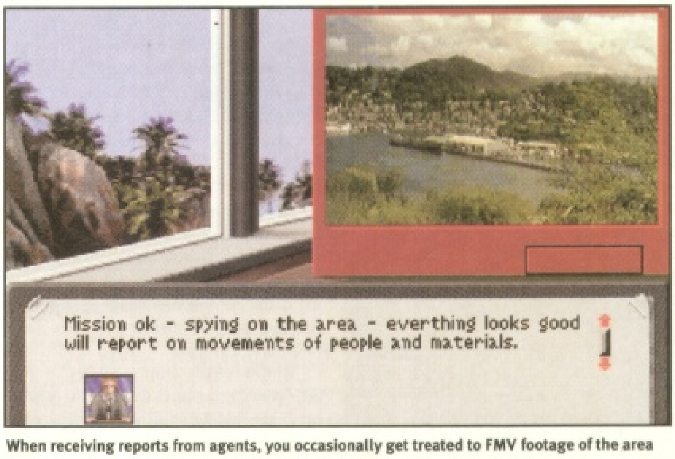
This problem is exacerbated by the repetitive nature of the gameplay — in the first hour of play you see pretty much all the variation the game has to offer. While this may be an accurate representation of the tedious realities of a modern spymaster's life, it translates into an equally tedious computer game. Given the game's size and complexity, it could be months of long, hard slog before you even come within sniffing distance of toppling the President, by which time chances are you'll have lost interest long ago.

One thing that really puzzled me about Central Intelligence was why it had to be on CD. Sure, there are stacks of digitised shots of the island's many exotic locations, but they're so grainy and horrible that it's hard to see why anyone bothered including them. There are some 'full-motion video' bits too, but these are largely irrelevant to the action and thus redundant.

But I'm just nit-picking now. Central Intelligence has some good ideas at its core, the trouble is they're obscured by confusing game mechanics, a far-too-steep learning curve and a severe lack of excitement. It's a far cry from the over-the-top antics of James Bond, that's for sure...

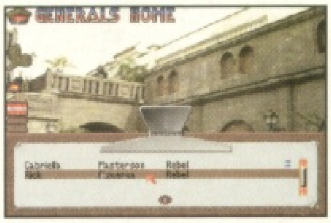


You can call up a map of the island at any time, and zoom in on any area of it to inspect where you've placed your agents and so on.



Mission ok - spying on the area - everthing looks good will report on movements of people and materials.

When receiving reports from agents, you occasionally get treated to FMV footage of the area they're spying on or of events they've seen. It's not very interesting, though.



When you've sent an agent to a certain part of the island, you can get info on the important people who live there and give orders for them to be followed or even assassinated.

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE CD

OCEAN/RISC
(061) 832 6633
£TBA OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb, CD-ROM drive and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Has a realistic ambience about it.
- You do get the feeling that there's a good game in there. Perhaps.

...AND THE BAD

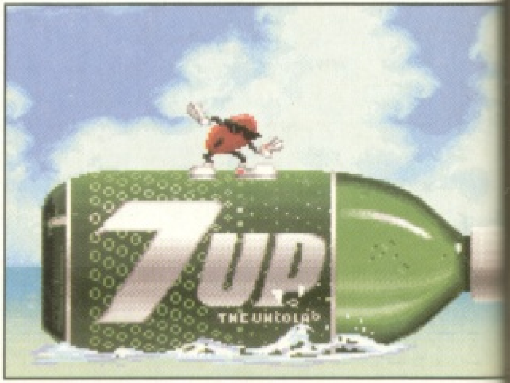
- Incredibly confusing to get started with. Incredibly confusing to get started with.
- The bulk of the disk is loaded with digitised location shots which look like someone's blurry holiday snaps.
- The dull, oft-repeated full-motion video clips don't add much either.

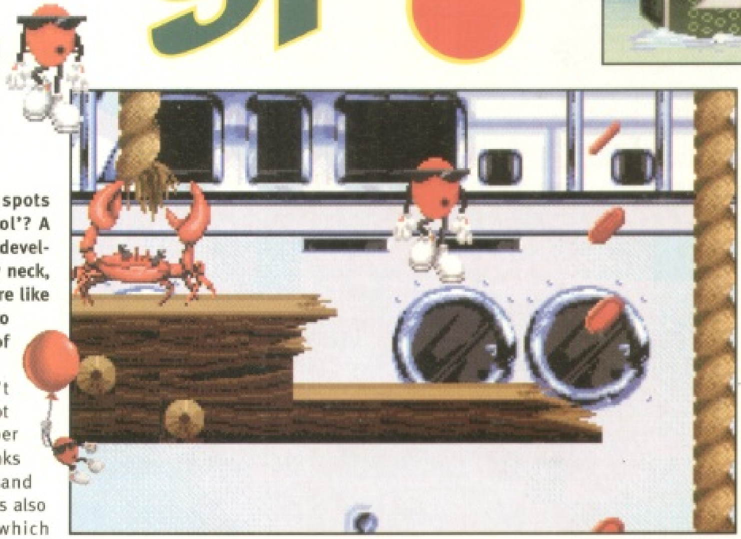
OVERALL

61%

David Upchurch discovers that spots CAN be fun in Virgin's great platform romp.

Cool Spot





Since when have spots been, ahem, 'cool'? A few weeks back I developed a nasty rash of boils on my neck, and I didn't feel at all cool — more like an ugly git. (You should be used to that by now, Dave. — The rest of the team.)

Nevertheless, that hasn't deterred Virgin from making a spot the hero of its new platform caper and, yes, he is *incredibly* cool, thanks to his trendy outfit of trainers and shades and his laid-back gait. He's also the official 7-Up character, which explains the numerous references to the popular fizzy drink that appear throughout the game. Subliminal advertising? I love it.

Anyway, it seems that Spot's chums have been kidnapped by some ne'er-do-well, and it's up to our rotund hero to save them. To achieve this noble goal he has to run and jump his way through six sprawling levels of ledges and ladders because in each of them there's one of his mates locked up in cage.

To free them, Spot first has to collect the spinning Spot tokens scattered throughout each level. Once he has enough (as specified at the beginning of the level) he can shoot the cage's lock, release his friend and move on to the next level.

And of course, nothing in life — especially that of a platform hero like Spot — is ever quite *that* simple, and there are legions of nasties, like spiders, worms and wasps, all doing their best to Oxycute him.

Fortunately, Spot is armed with spinning balls of fizziness — at least, that's what they look like to me — that he can fire at the baddies. In fact, Spot is a bit if a whizz with the fizz and is able to shoot in any direction, allowing him to pick off targets long before they become a danger to him.

Spot can only take a few knocks before he loses one of his valuable lives, although fortunately some of the baddies release a bottle of energy-restoring pop when shot. There are other helpful bonuses to collect as well, such as alarm clocks which extend each level's time limit and the inevitable though rare extra life icons.

And that, in a nutshell, is Cool Spot. But although it may sound rather formulaic, there are some neat touches that elevate it well above the many run-of-the-mill platformers around at the moment.

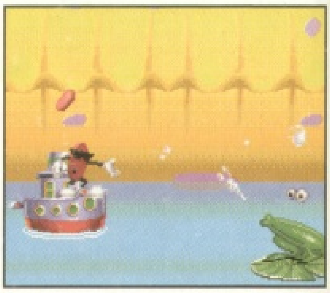
For a start, it's all so *polished* The smoothly-scrolling backgrounds are colourfully drawn, there are some excellent parallax effects and the jingles are great without being grating. Spot himself is a joy to control and is wonderfully animated and full of character.

Like most platform games, the repetitive nature of the gameplay can get tedious. However, Cool Spot manages to keep the interest from flagging by rewarding players who perform exceptionally well with extra lives, continues (which allow you to restart the game from the last level you reached after all your lives have been used up) and even a special 'bonus' level.

Cool Spot isn't perfect, though. Because of Spot's size and the speed of the nasties, progress is largely achieved by anticipating attacks rather than reacting to them, making Cool Spot more a test of memory than platform-hopping skills.

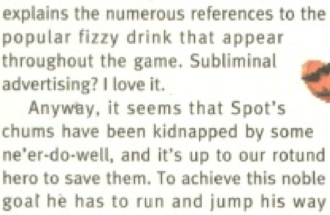
The baddies themselves are a pretty uninteresting bunch, too, especially in comparison to the flamboyant Spot. Household pests aren't the most exciting of foes at the best of times, and their limited, same-y attack patterns don't help things much.

But despite these faults, I still enjoyed Cool Spot. Bright, incredibly playable and offering a long-term challenge, it definitely wins the award of the best platform game on PC.

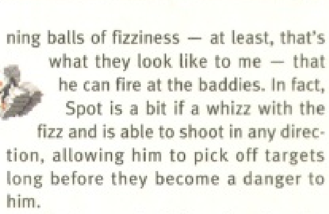


(Above) A pained-looking Spot suffers an attack of the crabs.

(Above right) Aboard his ship, Spot prepares to repel boarders.



In the bonus game Spot bounces around, pinball-like, in a 7-Up bottle collecting goodies.



Aaiiee! A cheese-lobbing mouse — surely the most terrifying platform nasty ever? (No.)

COOL SPOT

VIRGIN/IN-HOUSE

(081) 960 2255

£29.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM and 1.5Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster and Adlib soundcards.

THE GOOD...

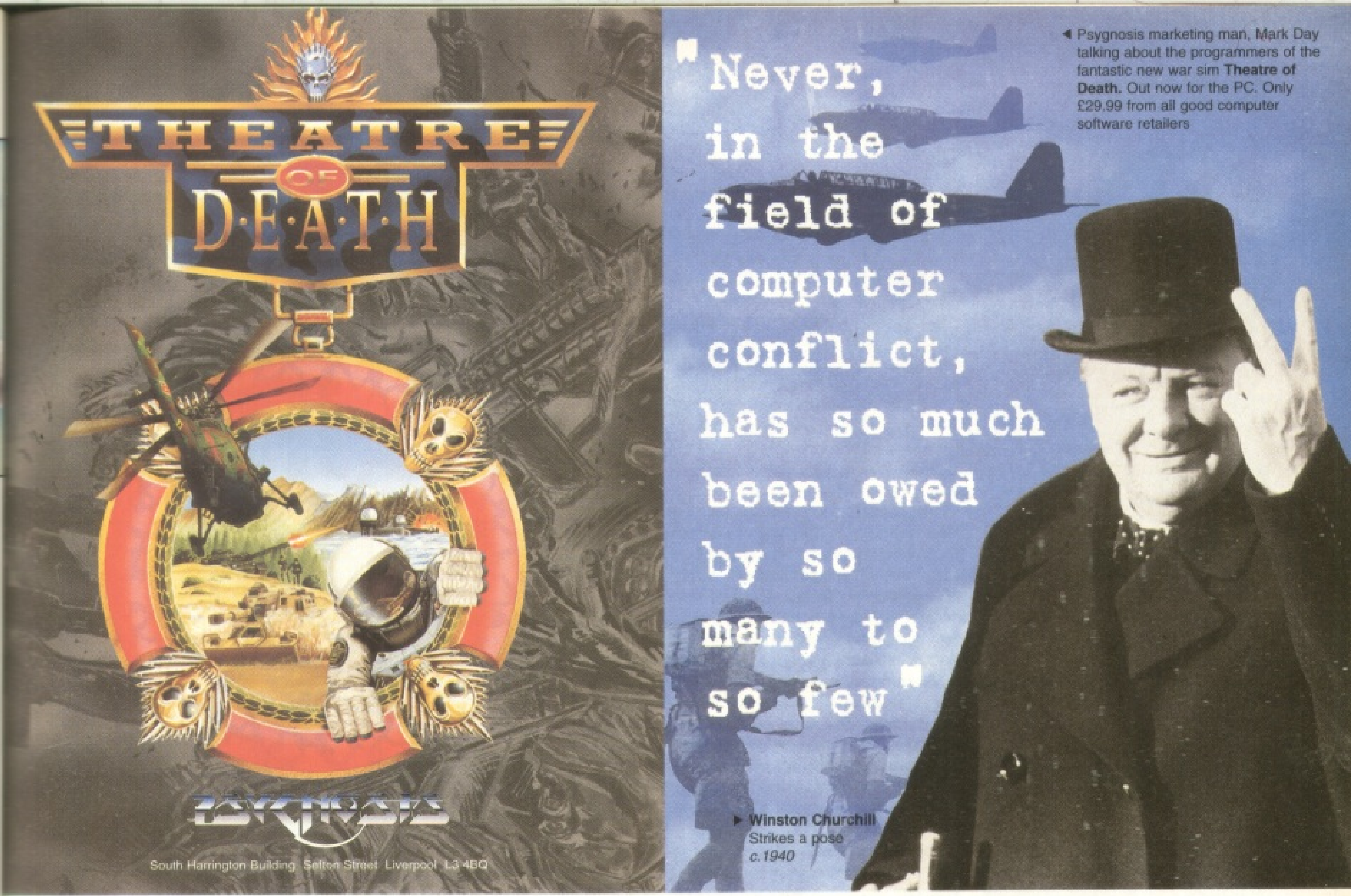
- Absolutely *gorgeous* to look at — the parallax-scrolling backdrops are as good as anything in the arcades.
- Wonderfully responsive control over the Spot-ster.

...AND THE BAD

- Success relies too much on knowing map layouts and baddy positions rather than real skill.
- Spot's enemies aren't the most terrifying or interesting bunch of game characters ever asssembled.

OVERALL

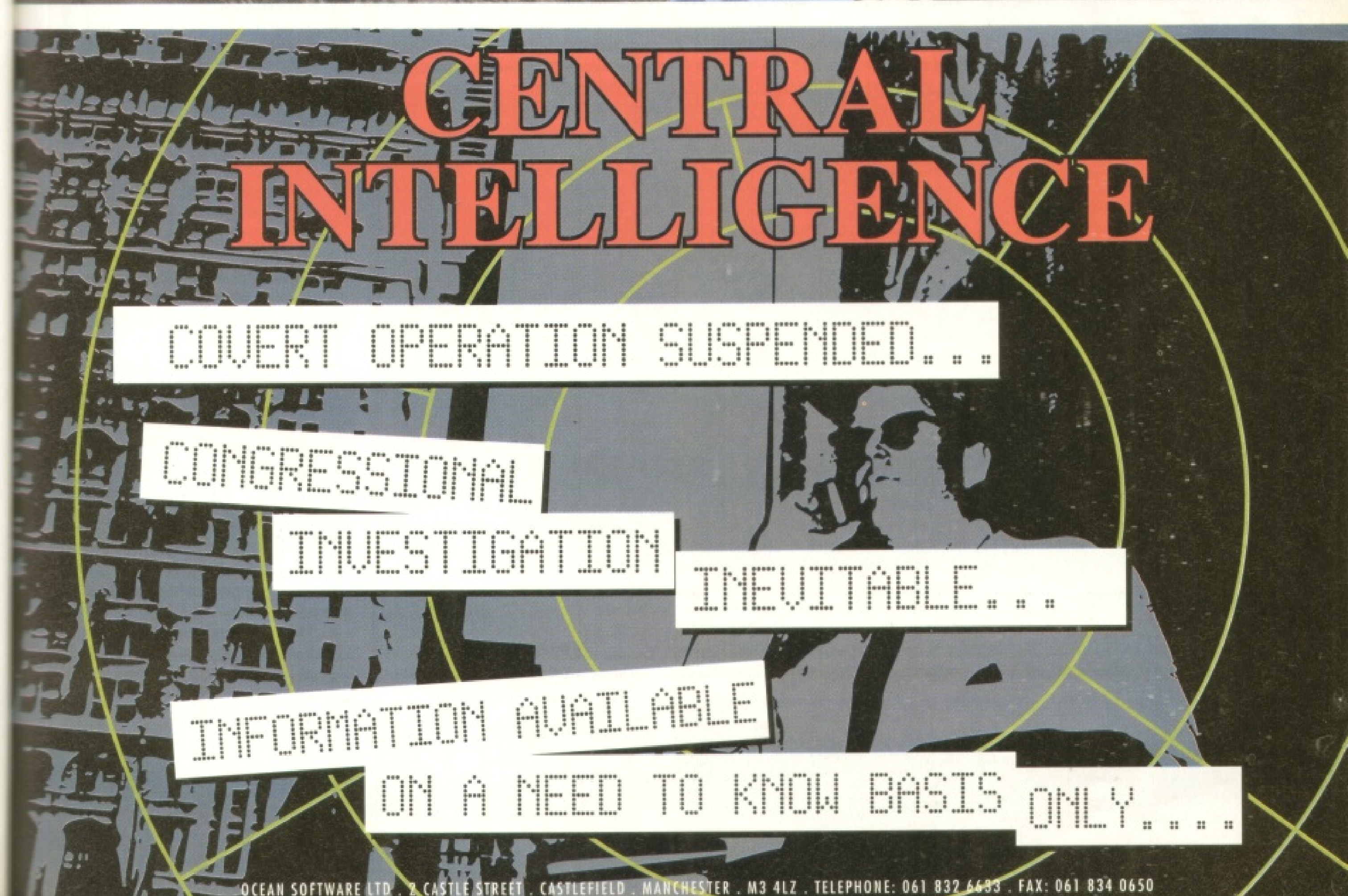
83%



THEATRE
OF
D·E·A·T·H
"Never, in the field of computer conflict, has so much been owed by so many to so few"
◄ Psygnosis marketing man, Mark Day talking about the programmers of the fantastic new war sim **Theatre of Death.** Out now for the PC. Only £29.99 from all good computer software retailers

► **Winston Churchill** Strikes a pose *c.1940*

PSYGNOSIS
South Harrington Building Sefton Street Liverpool L3 4BQ



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PC GAMES STAR

Theme Park

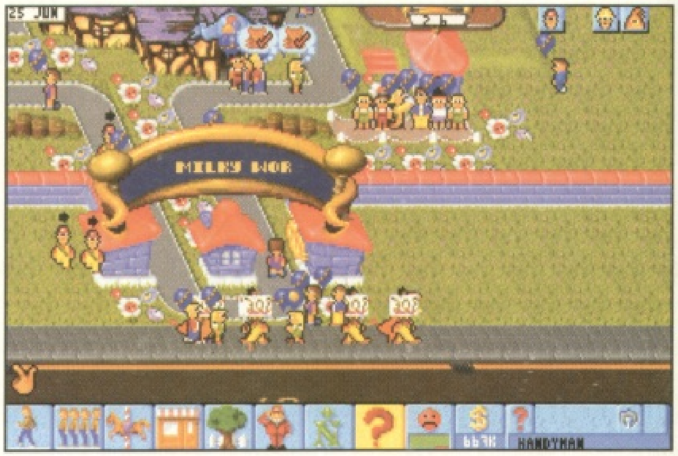
Roll up! Roll up! Step right this way as Alex Fraser presents his death-defying, deadline-surfing review of The Great Bullfrog's latest work of genius!

Hey, nobody said saving the world was going to be easy! Or at least, no-one involved with this game said it, because all you have to do in Theme Park is build, er, theme parks.

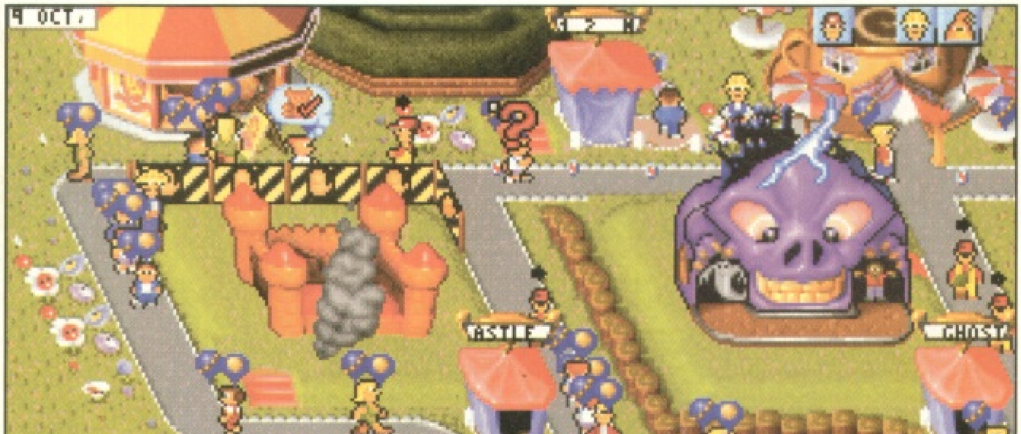
But — pshaw! — I glibly say 'all' when what I really mean is 'a small fraction of what' because, as in Maxis' SimCity 2000, the real challenge comes when you have to keep your creation going and competitive.

There are forty other theme parks in the world and the idea is to beat them all to the title of Ultimate Theme Park by being the richest, the biggest, the most exciting, the most satisfying, having the best amenities and the pleasantest atmosphere. And how do you do that? Well, why don't I start at the beginning? Your quest into Mass Entertainment starts when you pick the location of your planned park. With a few hundred thousand (quid, dollars, it's not specified) in your pocket you're presented with a world map marked with possible sites, all of which have their own advantages and disadvantages and a corresponding price tag. Some are in hot countries where people get out a lot, some are in sparsely populated countries where custom could well be slim.

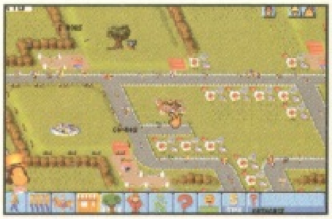
Once you've bought your site, it appears on screen, a huge field just waiting to be filled with fun and paying customers. It's pointless letting them in before there's anything to see, though, so before you open the gates you need to spend some of your moolah on pathways, a couple of rides and maybe a cafe or two.



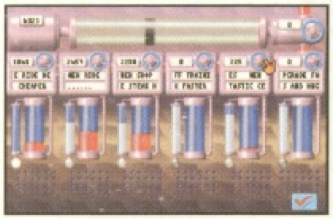
Everybody out! Workers' pay negotiations have collapsed and the Chicken Men are outside the park picketing. This is terrible for business!



Keep an eye on the condition of the rides or they tend to burst into flames! This time the mechanic arrived just too late.



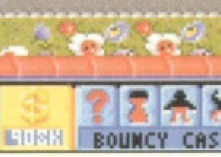
Tiny graphics mode makes it easier to lay paths and position rides when the regular screen is cluttered with wandering punters.

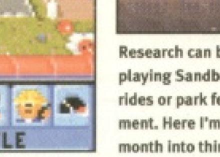


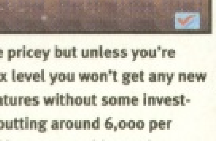
Research can be pricey but unless you're playing Sandbox level you won't get any new rides or park features without some investment. Here I'm putting around 6,000 per month into thinking up new rides and improving the old ones.

Fairground *Attraction*

Theme Park kicks off with a rather excellent ray-traced intro which could almost be an Aardvark animated commercial, complete with Ronald McDonald-esque voice-over (provided you've got a Sound Blaster or equivalent plugged in).







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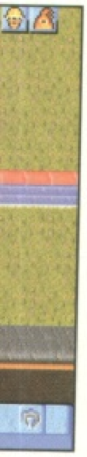

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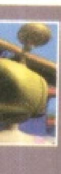
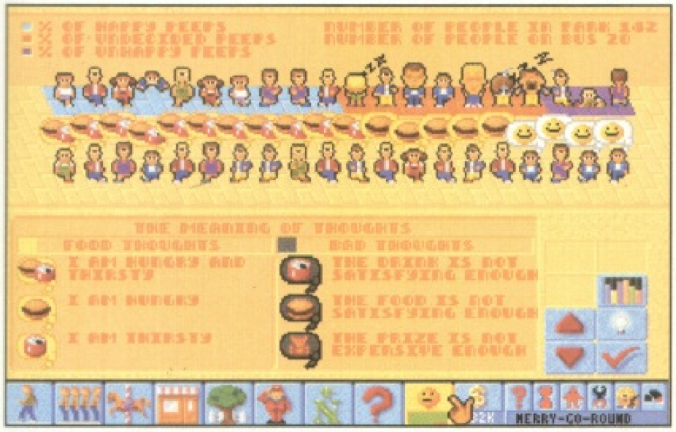




% OF HAPPY PEEPS
% OF UNDECIDED PEEPS
% OF UNHAPPY PEEPS
NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN PARK 142
NUMBER OF PEOPLE ON BUS 20

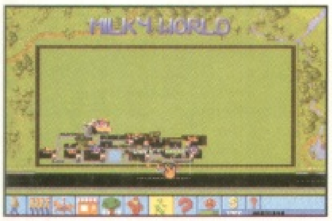
THE MEANING OF THOUGHTS

FOOD THOUGHTS
I AM HUNGRY AND THIRSTY
I AM HUNGRY
I AM THIRSTY

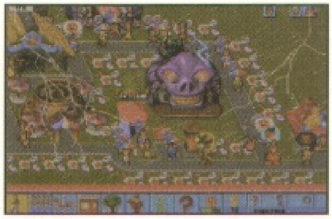
BAD THOUGHTS
THE DRINK IS NOT SATISFYING ENOUGH
THE FOOD IS NOT SATISFYING ENOUGH
THE PRIZE IS NOT EXPENSIVE ENOUGH

MERRY-GO-ROUND

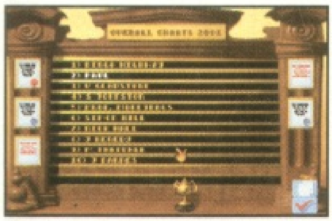
The Park Status screen shows the proportion of punters who are happy (blue), indifferent (yellow) or positively loathing it (purple). It also shows what they're thinking. At the moment, most of them are hungry and thirsty.



The map screen shows how far you need to go to fill up your park. Milky World is a real bijou establishment at the moment, but at least that saves land tax.

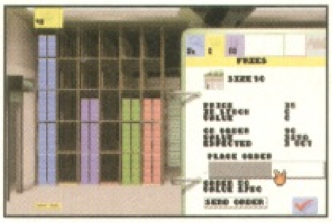


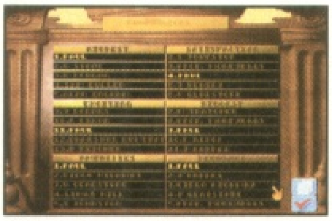
Eerie! Lightning plays about the roof of the Ghost House ride! Later in the game you can adorn the park with spooky trees for the full Scooby Doo effect.



The rankings screen appears at the end of every year. The certificates indicate the general standards of rides, safety and popularity, and you're awarded trophies when the park is the best in the world in some way (the longest Rubber Tubing ride or the highest share value, for example).

(Below) When you're playing the more complex and involved SIM or FULL games, the popular restaurants run out of supplies all-too-frequently, so you need to constantly re-order or risk the phenomenon known as Zero Caff Turnover.





Milky World may not be the biggest or the most exciting park in the world, but at least it's got lots of clean toilets — and that matters. Mind you, to achieve your goal of creating the ULTIMATE park you need to be number one in all these areas.

The whole process is mouse-driven, so this is all simple enough (there's even a short tutorial for complete novices). Just draw in paths using the trowel tool, and choose rides and shops from the appropriate menus then plonk them onto the landscape. As the game begins, you're given only a few of the cheaper attractions to experiment with, but they're enough to keep you going for the first couple of game years, and after that you have to invest in research and rely on your boffins to come up with more interesting gear.

With your first few attractions in place and a couple of cleaning and maintenance staff standing by, you can fling open the gates and start taking some money. Once they're inside the park, punters start spending their cash, and ideally you don't want them to leave until their pockets are empty.

To keep them in the park you've got to pander to their whims. So excite them with thrillsome rides. Soothe them with pleasant garden surroundings. Feed them, water them, then let them unload their digestive tracts in shiny toilets.

Punters can be pretty picky and if they can't find food, or a loo, or suspect that you're ripping them off with the prices at the souvenir store they'll start leaving, and tell all their friends what a stinker your park is.

Fortunately, gauging the punters' moods is made easier by the thinks bubbles which appear over their heads, indicating their thoughts with an icon. If people are walking around musing over crushed tin cans, for example, you've got a litter problem and need to hire more handymen.

The smiley face on the menu bar and the park status screen also show the general mood amongst the customers, and even the sound effects alert you to problems. If you hear an 'URRRK!' followed by a crowd of 'URRGH!'s, you know there's some vomit on your byways, and you need to find someone to clear up the mess before people have to wade through it.

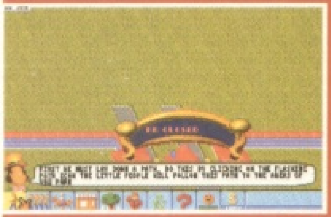
As well as responding to customers' needs, you can use a bit of psychology and jiggery-pokery to create demand and promote flagging attractions. Most of the shops and sideshows have some tweakable feature which makes them more popular, though always at a price. You can make a ride more exciting or get more people through it at a time if you speed it up or load more people on at once, but this makes breakdowns more likely.

You can turn a failing coconut shy into a popular sideshow by increasing the chance of winning. Obviously you end up spending more on prizes, but the increased takings usually make the investment worth it. In a more sinister, mind-manipulating vein, you can create a thirst for drinks by putting extra salt on the French Fries in your food stall or get people addicted to your ice cream by increasing its sugar content.

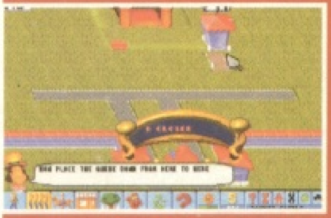
As well as maintaining the park, you need to be constantly upgrading it to keep punters rolling up year after year. Invest money in research to come up with new rides and amenities, improvements to old rides, and staff training. Make a reputation and hold onto it by keeping up safety standards and paying

Getting The Show On The Road

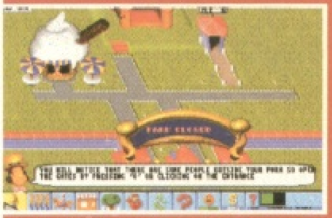
Getting to grips with the basics of fairground construction is made easier by the tutorial, which runs whenever you start a new park with the 'FIRST GAME' mode activated. Your genial host is The Adviser who offers words of wisdom throughout the game if you let him.



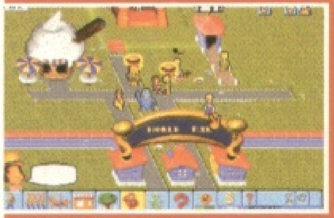
The gates are closed, giving you a chance to start your park by tarmaccing two paths from the entrance into the grounds. Hey, it may not be much, but it's a beginning...



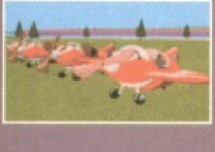
Your first available ride is a bouncy castle — not extravagant but the good stuff comes later. Note that you have to set up an entrance booth with queuing rails and an exit ramp.

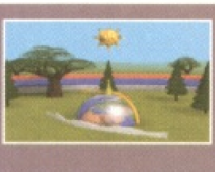


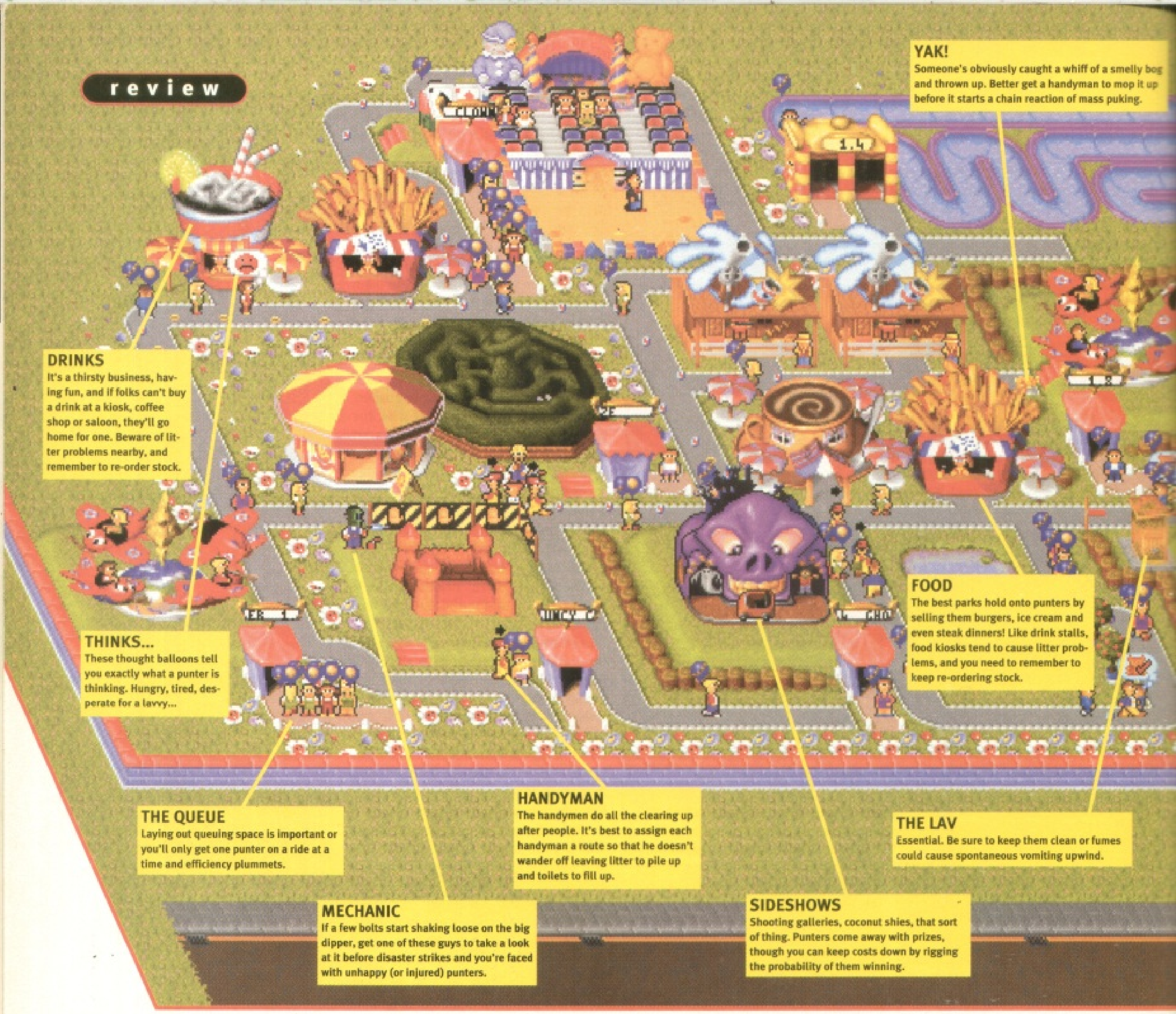
Your first ride is set up, and there's your first shop, an ice cream stall. Now you can let the punters in and start making some money.



You're off! The newly-hired shark man welcomes the first ice cream-hungry customers, while the handyman and mechanic stand by to collect litter and fix damaged rides.







YAK!
Someone's obviously caught a whiff of a smelly bog and thrown up. Better get a handyman to mop it up before it starts a chain reaction of mass puking.

DRINKS
It's a thirsty business, having fun, and if folks can't buy a drink at a kiosk, coffee shop or saloon, they'll go home for one. Beware of litter problems nearby, and remember to re-order stock.

THINKS...
These thought balloons tell you exactly what a punter is thinking. Hungry, tired, desperate for a lavvy...

FOOD
The best parks hold onto punters by selling them burgers, ice cream and even steak dinners! Like drink stalls, food kiosks tend to cause litter problems, and you need to remember to keep re-ordering stock.

THE QUEUE
Laying out queuing space is important or you'll only get one punter on a ride at a time and efficiency plummets.

HANDYMAN
The handymen do all the clearing up after people. It's best to assign each handyman a route so that he doesn't wander off leaving litter to pile up and toilets to fill up.

THE LAV
Essential. Be sure to keep them clean or fumes could cause spontaneous vomiting upwind.

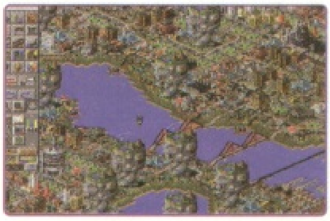
MECHANIC
If a few bolts start shaking loose on the big dipper, get one of these guys to take a look at it before disaster strikes and you're faced with unhappy (or injured) punters.

SIDESHOWS
Shooting galleries, coconut shies, that sort of thing. Punters come away with prizes, though you can keep costs down by rigging the probability of them winning.

IT'S A BIT LIKE...

Planning, laying out highways, keeping people happy — it's all *very* reminiscent of SimCity 2000, though the jolly atmosphere makes it all a bit less daunting and rather more enjoyable. It's a close run thing but if you asked me to choose between them, I'd go for Theme Park.

THEME PARK...



...A FUN SIMCITY 2000?

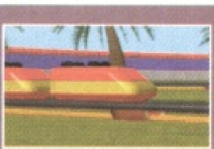
attention to little things like planting trees and creating lakes just to make the park environment more pleasant.

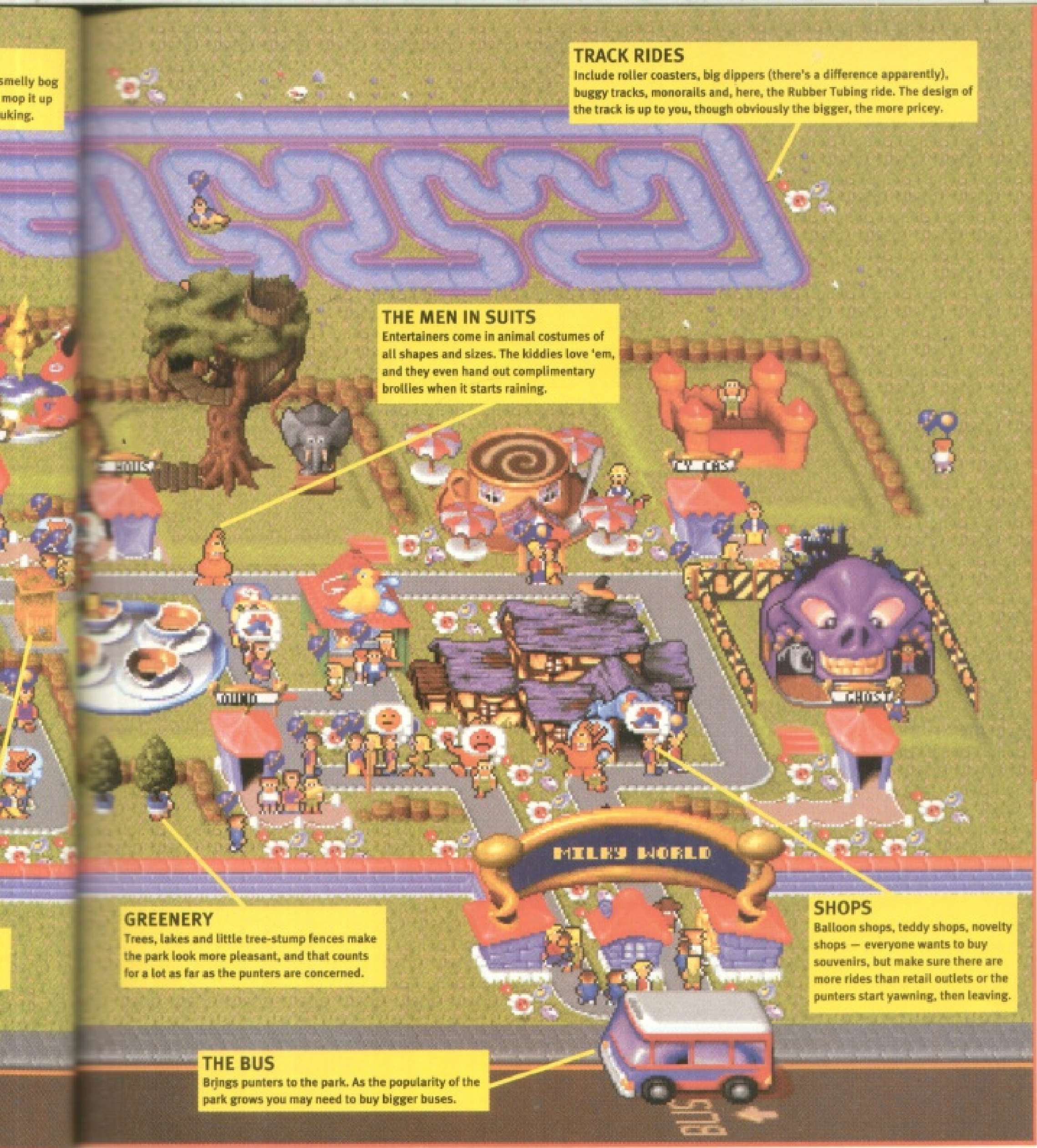
All these things count and the rankings screens which appear at the end of each game year show how well you're doing in these areas, comparing your park with the 40 others in the world.

Becoming number one in every category is your ultimate goal, but if your original park doesn't look like it's going to make it to the top you can either auction it off and start again or invest in the others until you own a large enough stake to launch a takeover bid.

Finance, fairground fun psychology, people management (did I mention sacking the lazy mechanics or negotiating wages with the guys in the chicken suits?) — this game really does have it all, and in very realistic quantities. As in SimCity 2000 you really do get the feeling that everything in the game works as it would in real life and every decision you make counts.

But what made Theme Park more enjoyable, for me at least, was the fact that you're not just building drains and dealing with a faceless crowd of Sims who want a faster way to work. In Theme Park you're trying to show your little punters a good time. You get a real kick out of installing a cool new ride, almost as if you were installing it for yourself to play on, and the way you can watch individual punters walking around the park and check on how they're feeling really does make you feel more involved. After a while, you even get a buzz of pleasure when you





smelly bog
mop it up
uking.

TRACK RIDES
Include roller coasters, big dippers (there's a difference apparently), buggy tracks, monorails and, here, the Rubber Tubing ride. The design of the track is up to you, though obviously the bigger, the more pricey.

THE MEN IN SUITS
Entertainers come in animal costumes of all shapes and sizes. The kiddies love 'em, and they even hand out complimentary brollies when it starts raining.

GREENERY
Trees, lakes and little tree-stump fences make the park look more pleasant, and that counts for a lot as far as the punters are concerned.

SHOPS
Balloon shops, teddy shops, novelty shops — everyone wants to buy souvenirs, but make sure there are more rides than retail outlets or the punters start yawning, then leaving.

THE BUS
Brings punters to the park. As the popularity of the park grows you may need to buy bigger buses.

Welcome To My World!

That's right, Milky World, home of The Milky Bar Kid, the rootin'-est, tootin'-est, creamy-white-chocolate-chewin'-est bespectacled junior cowboy west of the Pecos! The place where "The Milky Bars are on me"! Or something. Anyway, this is my park after about an hour of play. It might not look like much but it did get bigger, honest, and at least the punters seemed to like it. Anyway it serves to show off the basic Theme Park elements.

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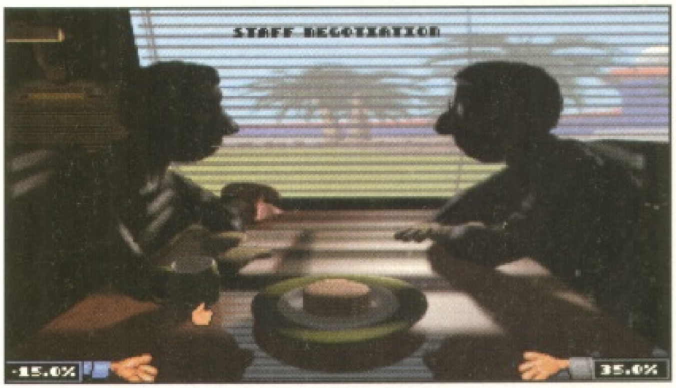
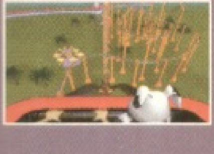
spot a happy punter waving at you with a cheery grin on their face.

My only problem with Theme Park is that reviewing it has been one of the hardest tasks I've ever had, simply because there's so much good stuff that working out what to leave in and what to leave out has been a pain. A couple of days' work usually suffices for most games, but I've been writing this review for a week, and I'm still not sure I've done Theme Park justice. But you must have at least cottoned on to the fact that I think it's bloody brilliant.

In fact, if there were a Nobel Prize for Clever Game Design, I expect Theme Park would probably have to fight it out with SimCity 2000. Mind you, if I had the casting vote, Theme Park would definitely take the honours.



When staff start to feel downtrodden (the mechanics are usually the first) you may need to enter wage negotiations. The shrinking pile of biscuits indicates the amount of time you have left to haggle a price, and if you don't settle your differences before the biccies run out a strike is inevitable!



THEME PARK

Electronic Arts/Bullfrog
(0753) 549442
£44.99 Out Now

MINIMUM **SPEC**

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 18Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Roland and Gravis UltraSound soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Great intro.
- Great graphics.
- Great sound.
- Super-great gameplay which is staggeringly clever and staggeringly good fun.
- Yep, great everything, really.
- It's lovely.

...AND THE BAD

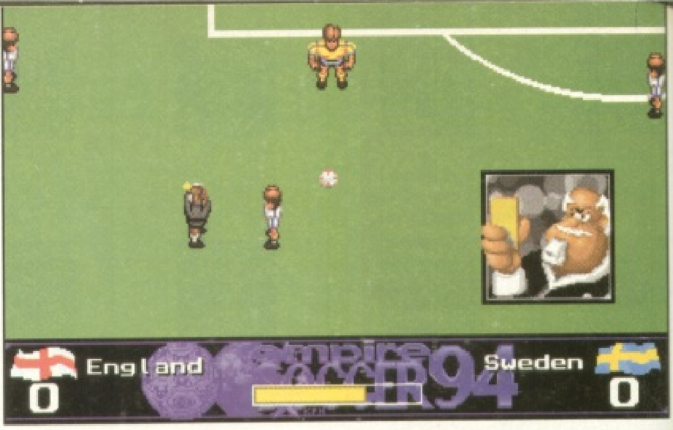
- Um... well, maybe the icon system is a bit tricky to get to grips with, but only at first.

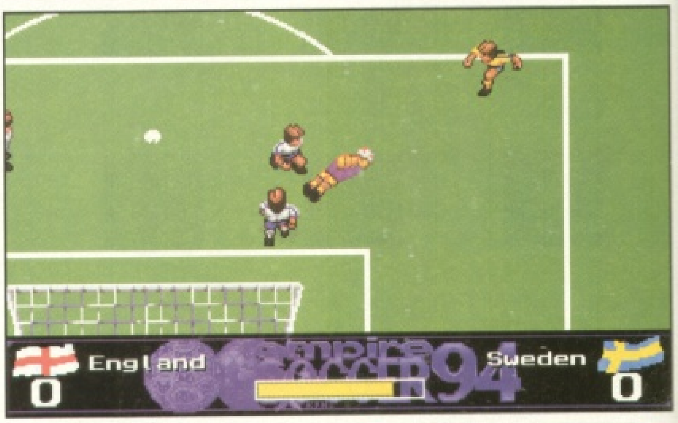
OVERALL

92%

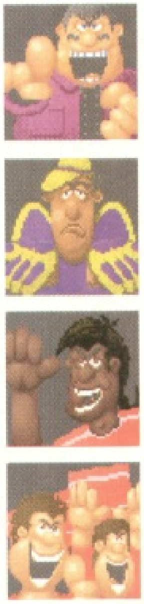
Empire Soccer '94

You're going down, with Luton Town! Join Dean Evans at Wembley as he shouts loudly at Empire's new footy game.





With the World Cup well and truly underway, it's no surprise to learn that the next few months will see a veritable football frenzy on your PC. In total around nine games are in the pipeline, all vying for a piece of the soccer pie and a comfy seat on the bandwagon. Some of these take the game seriously, lauding the tactical and strategic bits, and others take the opposite stance, embracing arcade elements and fast-paced footy action.



Empire Soccer '94 falls firmly into the latter category, being an all-action football game based loosely around this year's World Cup. Using a top-down, pseudo-3D perspective the game offers you the option to take part in either World Cup competition, exhibition matches or training sessions. And, like any good football game, you can change the teams, the formations, view action replays and even create your own tournaments.

What more can you really say? It's a football game — there's this little white ball, and 22 players try to kick it into a goal at each end of the pitch. That bit never changes — but what sets one football game apart from another is how it looks and the way that it plays.

As you can see from the screenshots, Empire Soccer's graphics have a simple, cartoon-like quality. This comic-book feel is further enhanced by that fact that each time you score, concede a goal or get booked, an appropriate little animation appears showing an irate manager or a tearful goalkeeper.

Developers Graftgold have also added a number of sillier touches, including knocked-out referees and super-powered shots. At the beginning of the game you can choose which 'special move' you'd like your players to be able to use, including Speed Burst, Power Drive, Super Barge, Super Dribble and Banana Shot, any of which could tip the delicate balance of the game your way.

With nice visuals and a suitably light-hearted approach, Empire Soccer should make for a very entertaining game. Sadly, however, it doesn't. At least, not after a while.

Why? Well, Empire Soccer is difficult to control and the view of the pitch means that you can't string together any intricate passing moves. Worse still, the very nature of the top-down, overhead type view means that you can't really see the goals until you're practically inside the netting.

Even more annoying is the complete and utter lack of a pitch radar which makes it almost impossible to know where your other players are. This is frustrating for the beginner, and regardless of whether you're a Sensible Soccer veteran or an England international, you'll be down 2-0 to the Ivory Coast in less than two minutes.

But is being difficult is a good thing? Well, yes and no. Okay, on the Pro level Empire Soccer '94 is not a game that you can sit down and beat easily, but after a few games it's not necessarily one that you can be bothered to beat at all.

And then there's the sound. The crowd roar sounds nothing like 50,000 cheering fans but rather like the sound of the sea or the hiss of radio static.

Yes, I've taken into account that it's not lining itself up as a fully-fledged football simulation, that it's more of an arcade kick-about, and that the game has been developed (according to the manual) with playability and fun very much in mind. This is all very admirable, but taking into account the shallow gameplay and the naff sound, Empire Soccer '94 looks, well, to be honest, it looks a bit amateurish. Sorry, Empire.

EMPIRE SOCCER '94

EMPIRE/GRAFTGOLD

(081) 343 7337

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 640K and 880K of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Mouse; joystick; Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards.

THE GOOD...

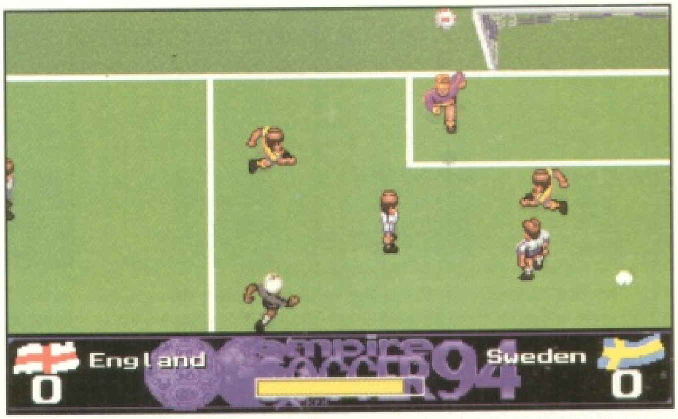
- A reasonably fun and uncomplicated football kick-about.

...AND THE BAD

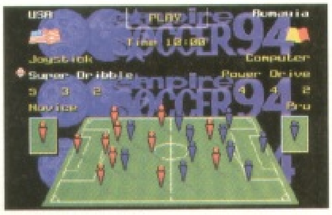
- The 3D pitch view means it's difficult to see where the goals and the players are.
- Lack of a passing game means you tend to just charge one player at the goal and then shoot — not very demanding gameplay, if you ask me.
- The graphics are cute but the sound is truly awful.

OVERALL

63%



(Above) Empire Soccer '94 allows you to play any one of 32 teams and, of course, it has all the usual football-type options such as changeable skill levels and statistical analysis .



(Left) The tactical screen allows you to choose your formation and select your special move.

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Whoever said slow but steady wins the race obviously never played this, reckons David Upchurch.

Delta V

I think William Gibson has a lot to answer for. For it was he who created the term 'Cyberspace' and he who gave birth to the whole 'Cyberpunk' genre way back in the early 80s. Ever since then almost every game set 'sometime in the future' has featured a scenario wibbling on about things like 'wireheads' and 'jacking-in', even when such Virtual Reality-inspired trappings are not remotely relevant or necessary to the gameplay.

Take Delta V, for example. It's a fast-action 3D shoot-'em-up, with the player careering along shallow canyons, dodging girders and struts while zapping enemy ships, in a manner akin to the final Death Star stage in the old Star Wars coin-op (for more on that turn to feature on page 104, nostalgia saddies!).

The scenario could've been about *anything* — a space pilots' testing ground, perhaps, or a war against aliens which live in the canals of Mars — but no, it had to be about Cyberspace, didn't it?

In Delta V's startlingly unoriginal vision of the future, the world is dominated by vast multi-national Mega-Corporations. Information is power, and a never-ending war rages across the GlobalNet as the Mega-Corps attempt to steal or destroy their rivals' precious and highly-valuable stores of data.

And when a Mega-Corp's own Netrunners can't come up with the goods, they call in the Black Sun organisation, a group of elite 'hackers-for-hire' — and you're one of them. Although the risks are many (having your brain fried is the least of them), the rewards are huge — when a Mega-Corp wants data this bad, it'll pay *anything* to get it.

Delta V thus takes the form of a series of missions in which the player has to fly his spaceship — well, they call it a 'Trace' (ugh!), but it looks, flies and behaves like a spaceship, so there — along the NetLattice in an attempt to capture data, destroy a Mega-Corp's ICE defences or whatever it is your employees have hired you to do.

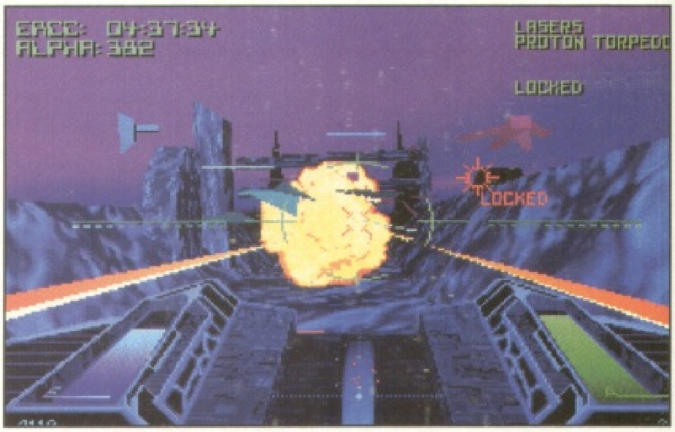
Before each sortie you're given a briefing on the specific task that lies ahead and some warnings as to the kinds of defences you'll face, then it's off to the armoury to kit out your ship with weapons, shields and power generators — although quite *what* weapons, shields and power generators are doing in the artifically-created world of Cyberspace I do not know (remember what I said about plot bearing no resemblance to the gameplay?). Your arsenal is pretty feeble to begin with, but as you progress through the missions you're occasionally rewarded with new toys to play with.

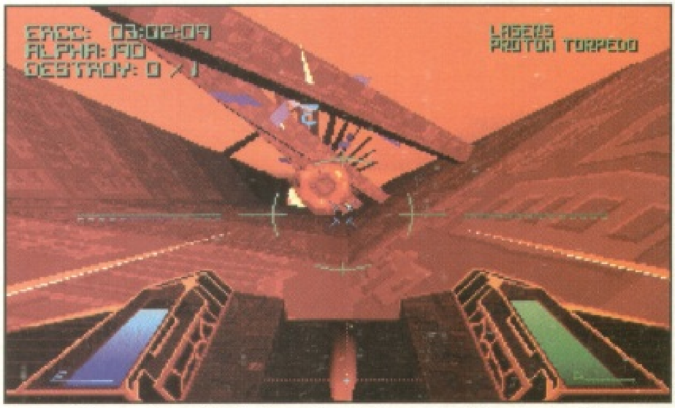
Once you're happy with your ship's set-up, it's time to jack into the Netlattice, a vast plain criss-crossed by data lines. And it's along these trench-like data lines you must travel, because your ship uses them to absorb power. The longer you stay in the trench, the faster you'll go — and you'll also stay out-of-sight of the ICE anti-Trace defences.

Stray away from them, however, and you'll slow to a crawl and eventually explode (for some reason I couldn't quite fathom). All the same, don't wander *too* near the trench walls — contact with them will damage your ship.

This all wouldn't be so bad if it wasn't for the fact that these data lines are very dangerous places to be, winding and splitting, lined with jutting spikes and pillars, occasionally narrowing down into tiny tunnels that you can only *just* get through. On top of all that there are other Netrunners to contend with, all of whom are desperately trying to stop you

(Below) The enemy ships are disappointingly bland when compared to the detailed texture-mapped 3D trenches, consisting of nothing more than a few polygons stuck together

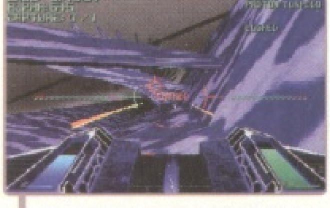




Because of the speed your ship zips along at, navigating your way through some of the more complex and intricate obstacles — like this avenue of rotating 'spines' — is more down to luck than actual games-playing skill.

IT'S A BIT LIKE...

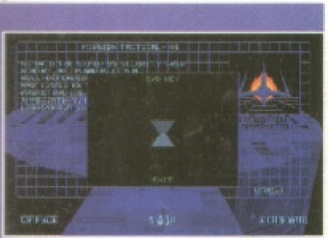
Delta V is a lot like CyberRace, which has very similar 'hug the path, blast the enemy' gameplay. But while CyberRace was no classic, it's still a lot better than this, offering an engrossing storyline, more variety in the action and a fair dollop of excitement. Remember: speed kills — and it's certainly killed Delta V.



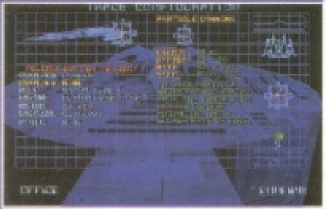
DELTA V...

... A POOR MAN'S CYBERRACE

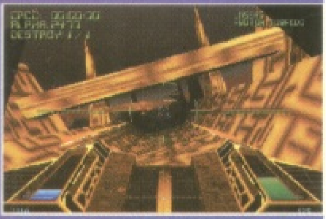
JACKIN' IN!



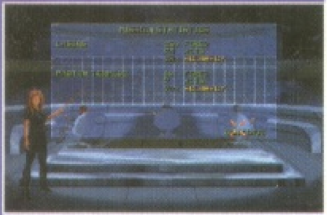
Before each mission you're given a briefing at Black Sun's HQ, which details your objectives and gives you a run-down on the defences you'll encounter.



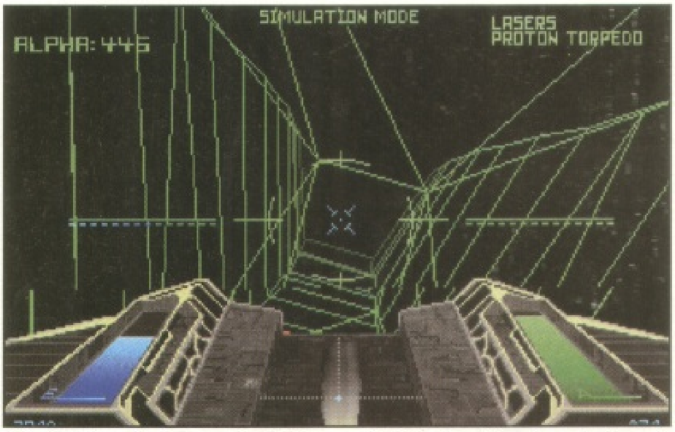
In the armoury you can click-'n'-drag weaponry and system upgrades from the equipment pool and fit them to your 'Trace'. Two gallons of Four Star please, mate.



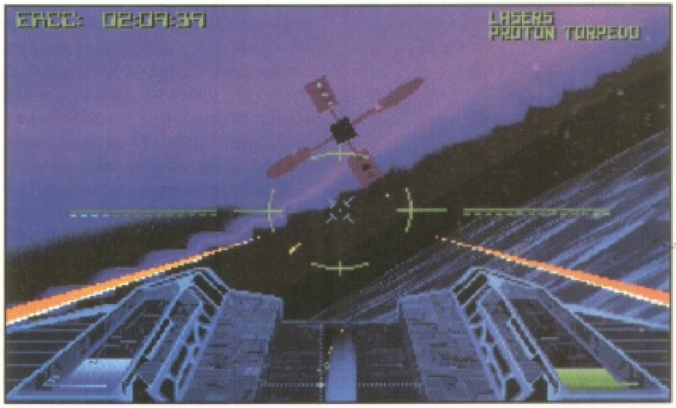
At last you're 'downloaded' onto the Netlattice and your mission begins. Stay close to the data line 'trench' and do try not to hit anything — these Traces are damn expensive!



After each mission you're given a debriefing detailing how good your shooting efficiency was, how many mission objectives you completed and — yum! — how much money you earned.

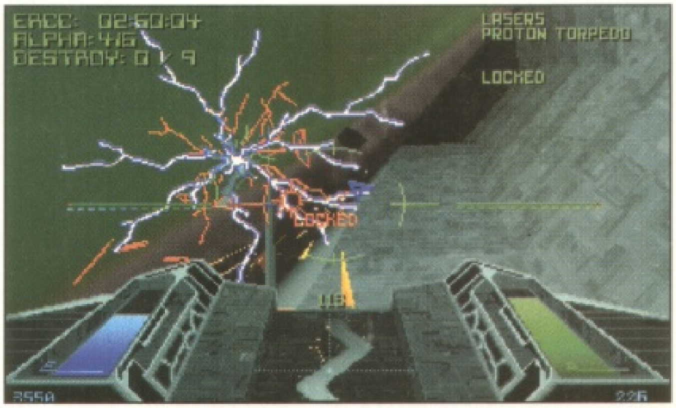


(Above) Before a mission you can familiarise yourself with the trench layout on a wireframe 3D 'simulator'. Its use is limited, however, by the fact that the objects are 'see-through', and all those green lines jumbled together make it very hard to work out what's going on.



(Above) Like any good shoot-'em-up, Delta V features 'end-of-level' guardians. These pop up during every fifth mission and take a heavy battering before giving up the ghost.

(Below) Destroying the ICE along the trench's rim makes it harder for the defence systems to get a lock on you — and it looks very pretty too!



completing your mission — which is where that out-of-place weaponry comes in handy.

Delta V's main selling point is its graphics. The developers Bethesda have obviously bought a new 3D modelling package and — by God! — they're going to use it. There are ray-traced animation sequences scattered liberally throughout the game and very attractive they are too, although they become a little tiresome after you've seen them for the zillionth time.

This high graphical quality is maintained in the trench sequences, with the impressive texture-mapped 3D scenery zipping by at a jaw-droppingly fast rate. Trouble is, although impressive, it really moves *too* fast — you have barely a nanosecond to react to the obstacles that rush into view out of the darkness, making getting past them more a matter of luck than skill.

Every collision causes your ship to rebound back down the trench a short way, allowing you take another shot at getting past each obstacle. Trouble is, you only get a second or so to correct your flight path before you're launched off again, and you can end up being knocked about from pillar to post like the Cyberspace equivalent of a pinball. This is annoying enough, but when you're racing against some of the missions' tight time limits it becomes positively infuriating.

This excessive speed becomes even more of a problem in Delta V's later levels, when some missions ask you to destroy certain objects along the way. If you miss one, you fail the mission — and given the speed everything shifts at, you often find you've flown past a target before you even knew it was there.

At first I thought Delta V might turn out to be a bit like Defender, which also seems too fast at first but grows on you as you learn how to handle its pace. Unfortunately, it's not — it really *is* too fast to be enjoyable.

It's not even that exciting — at the very least, you'd hope that such high-speed antics would result in some sort of adrenalin surge, but they don't. This is partly due to the fact you've got to keep hugging the trench all the time, which severely limits the amount of freedom you have to roam about and shoot things. There's not nearly enough variety, either — a few minor variations in layout and objective aside, every trench looks and plays pretty much the same as any other.

Bethesda has developed a truly marvellous 3D engine. Perhaps next time they'll develop a truly marvellous game to go with it.

DELTA V

US GOLD/BETHESDA

(021) 625 3388

£TBA OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 16Mb of hard disk space and mouse/joystick.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Pro Audio Spectrum, Gravis Ultrasound, Ensoniq SoundScape and Aria soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- The detailed 3D world moves with impressive speed and fluidity, although you really need a 486 to see it at its best.

...AND THE BAD

- Because of the game's speed, any success seems largely luck-based.
- Not nearly enough variety between the game's dozens of levels.
- Boring, heard-it-before storyline bears scant relation to the actual gameplay.

OVERALL

45%

Al-Qadim
The Genie's Curse

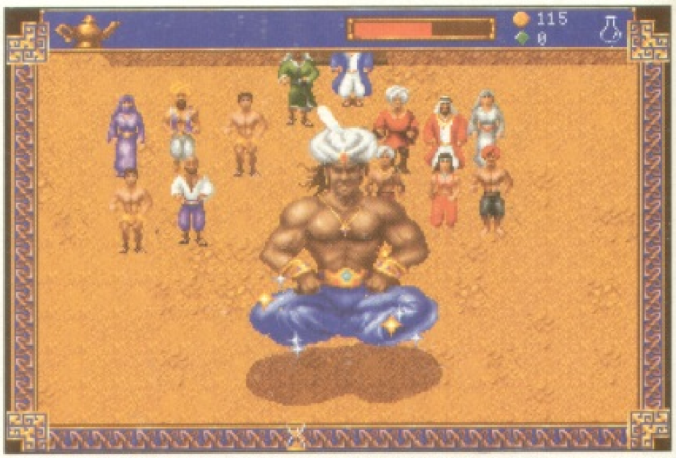
"This new SSI RPG is magic!" shouts our own Aladdin, David Upchurch, with glee.

Al-Qadim: The Genie's Curse is the latest in SSI's Advanced Dungeons & Dragons (2nd Edition) series of RPGs. But if you think that means it contains the usual goody-goody gang of warriors 'n' wizards, reams of dreary statistics and attributes, a cliché-riddled plot about some evil super-baddy taking over a fairy forest, and endless seen-'em-before battles against orcs, goblins and undead ghouls, then think again.

This, you see, is RPGing for the masses, with not an icon or a complex spell-casting system in sight. Indeed, Al-Qadim's AD&D roots are so neatly hidden away out of sight that you can hardly call it an RPG at all. I'll let the cat out of the bag — it's an arcade adventure, and a damn good one at that.

The game takes place in a fantasy world heavily inspired by the Arabian Nights, full of magic, dark intrigue and incredibly-powerful and capricious genies. You play a young corsair who, after many long months at sea, is returning home to his family on the island of Zaratan, bearing the joyous news that you are to wed the Caliph's beautiful princess daughter.

However, no sooner have you said hello to the folks than tragedy strikes. The ship carrying your bride-to-be to the island is sunk by a maleovelent genie and, as if that wasn't bad enough, the survivors claim that it was your family's 'pet' genie that did the dirty deed. (They all had 'em back then, you know.)



Fortunately, Al-Qadim's genies are not half as annoyingly hyperactive as the breed made popular by Robin Williams, although they still spell (ho-ho!) a whole load of trouble.

As genies will only obey orders from their masters, the Caliph has no option but to assume that your family must — for reasons unknown — have wanted the princess dead, and throws them into his dungeon. You, fortunately, are spared this humiliation and, knowing your family to be innocent, set out on a quest to clear your family's name and find your beloved princess — if she still lives, that is.

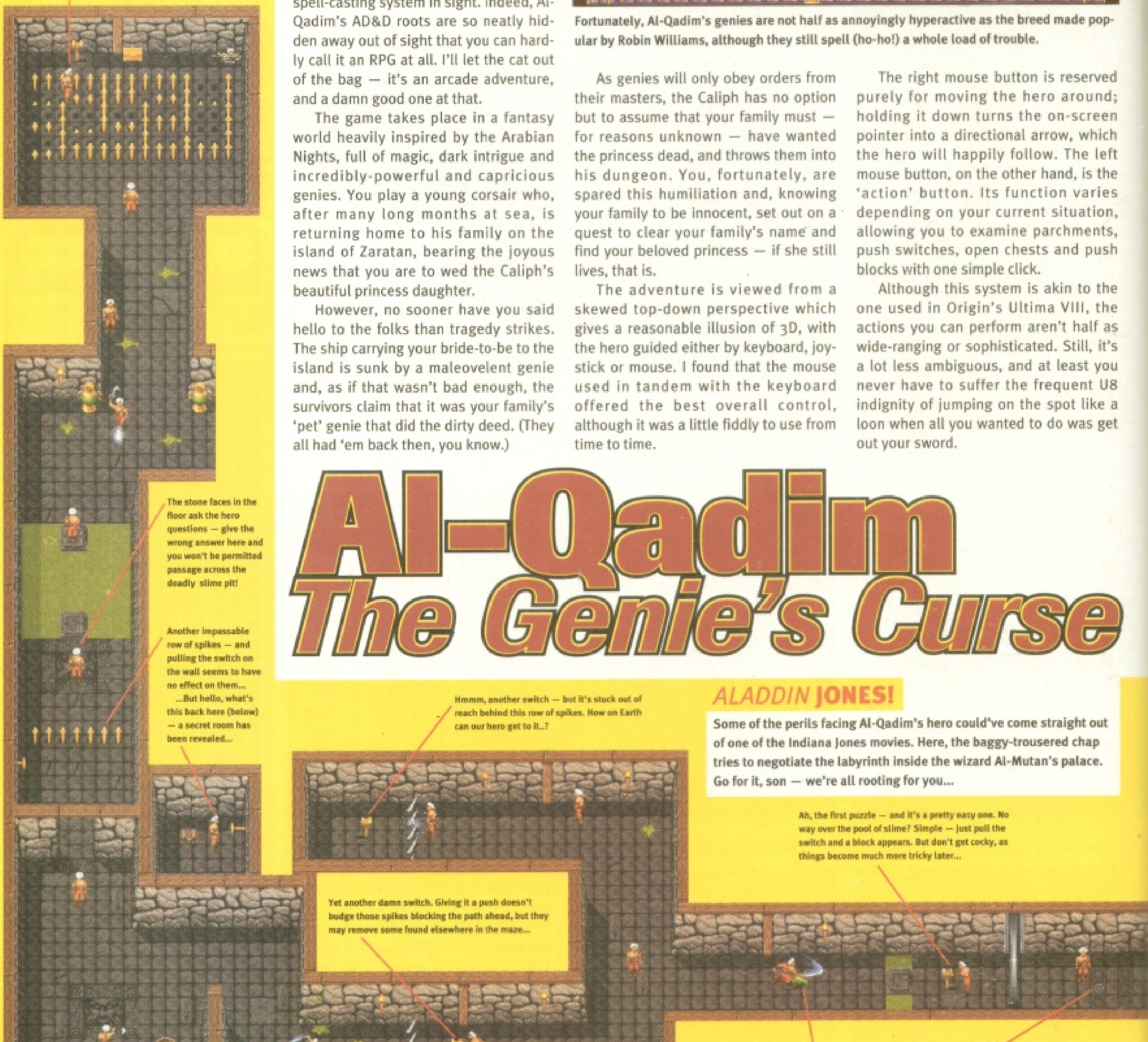
The adventure is viewed from a skewed top-down perspective which gives a reasonable illusion of 3D, with the hero guided either by keyboard, joystick or mouse. I found that the mouse used in tandem with the keyboard offered the best overall control, although it was a little fiddly to use from time to time.

The right mouse button is reserved purely for moving the hero around; holding it down turns the on-screen pointer into a directional arrow, which the hero will happily follow. The left mouse button, on the other hand, is the 'action' button. Its function varies depending on your current situation, allowing you to examine parchments, push switches, open chests and push blocks with one simple click.

Although this system is akin to the one used in Origin's Ultima VIII, the actions you can perform aren't half as wide-ranging or sophisticated. Still, it's a lot less ambiguous, and at least you never have to suffer the frequent U8 indignity of jumping on the spot like a loon when all you wanted to do was get out your sword.

ALADDIN JONES!

Some of the perils facing Al-Qadim's hero could've come straight out of one of the Indiana Jones movies. Here, the baggy-trousered chap tries to negotiate the labyrinth inside the wizard Al-Mutan's palace. Go for it, son — we're all rooting for you...



Mr Baggy-Pants negotiates a mini-maze of undulating spikes to reach a chest of goodies and yet *another* mysterious switch. And your adventures are only just beginning...

The stone faces in the floor ask the hero questions — give the wrong answer here and you won't be permitted passage across the deadly slime pit!

Another impassable row of spikes — and pulling the switch on the wall seems to have no effect on them...
...But hello, what's this back here (below) — a secret room has been revealed...

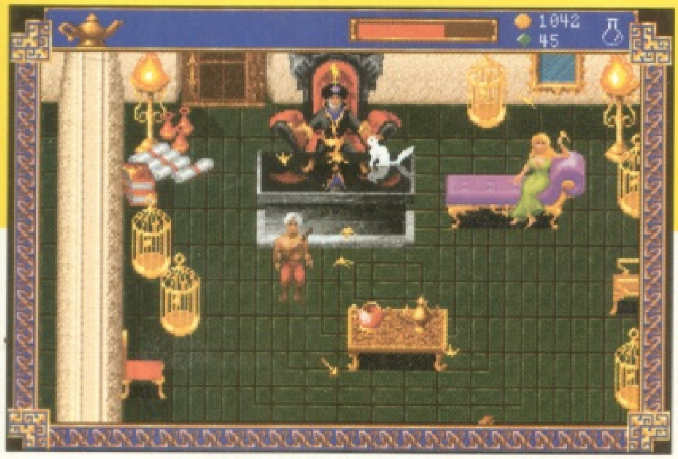
Hmmm, another switch — but it's stuck out of reach behind this row of spikes. How on Earth can our hero get to it..?

Yet another damn switch. Giving it a push doesn't budge those spikes blocking the path ahead, but they may remove some found elsewhere in the maze...

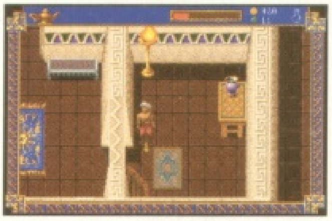
Ah, the first puzzle — and it's a pretty easy one. No way over the pool of slime? Simple — just pull the switch and a block appears. But don't get cocky, as things become much more tricky later...

Get too close to the slime pools and you may end up being attacked by a blob-thing. A few swipes with the sword will see it off...

The entrance to the maze is blocked by a might steel door. Walking over the floor tiles in the correct sequence will soon open it, though...



(Above) Al-Qadim offers the weary player lots of graphical treats to reward them for their endeavours — like this, Al-Mutan's chamber, complete with gold doves flying about. Aaah.



(Right) The contents of each room remains hidden until you enter it, whereupon the roof flies off (not literally, of course) and you get to gawp inside. Pretty boring in here, isn't it..?
(Far right) This is something you get to do a *lot* of in Al-Qadim — fighting. Apparently, these guys have got a bone to pick with you.

Talking of swords, it seems as good a time as any to talk about combat — and, boy, is there a lot of it. Barely a minute goes by without you having to dice 'n' slice some poor miscreant. Although the fighting is generally fun, the sheer volume of cannon fodder can become a bit tiresome at times.

Combat is controlled by — yup! — the action button. If there are any enemies nearby, clicking will make you slash out with your sword. As you grow in experience two further sword moves, inflicting greater damage over a wider range, are added to your repertoire of combat skills. These are accessed by holding down the action button until you reach a certain 'strike strength' (shown by the three balls in the menu bar illuminating) and then releasing.

Spells can be cast in an equally no-fuss, no-muss kind of way. Clicking on the lamp in the top-left corner gives you access to a list of spells in your possession. You simply select one and from then on you can let rip by pressing the Space bar. Since the spells 'home in' on the nearest unfriendly target you don't have to worry about aiming them or anything like that.

The ubiquitous 'action' button is also used to strike up conversations with any friendly characters you meet, although I use the term 'friendly' lightly. Once a conversation is initiated you are presented with the familiar list of relevant questions that you can ask, and once you've made your choice you get to read the character's reply. Although hardly innovative, it's functional and serves its purpose well enough.

In play, Al-Qadim proves to be a fast-moving affair, with the story evolving at a phenomenal rate, constantly throwing up new plot twists and diversions. This is definitely *not* a game for people who enjoy yomping around the same part of a dungeon for months on end searching for a hidden wall, but rather for those who like to be entertained, mildy challenged and then rewarded with a nice juicy carrot every now and again to keep their interest up.

It's unlikely that you'll ever get truly stuck, mainly because of the game's tight-as-a-drum plot construction. The gameworld consists of a series of islands, so your first task is to find a ship so that you can travel between them. Once you've done that, however, you discover that your voyages are further restricted by the fact that you can only sail to places once you've discovered the name of them (normally by completing a series of sub-quests).

This clever plot device means that the player's progress is rigidly controlled throughout the game, and it's near impossible to leave an island without completing most, if not all, of the important tasks you need to in order to make further headway.

Of course, while this is a good thing for people with short concentration spans, it does means that Al-Qadim is a relatively short-lived experience. Don't get me wrong, you get your money's worth, but anyone thinking this will keep them busy throughout the no-doubt drisly British summer will be sorely disappointed.

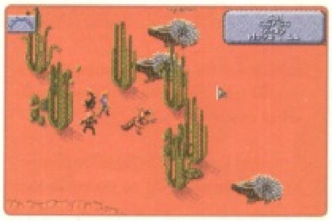
All in all, though, Al-Qadim is a lot of fun. My only real complaint concerns the sound; while the tunes are fine, the sound effects are frequently terrible, occasionally hilariously so — the oinking giant boars had us all rolling about. This is a big pity because it detracts from the excellent atmosphere generated so well elsewhere.

While 'serious' RPGers will no doubt shake their heads and sigh, anyone else who enjoys an exciting, action-packed and thoroughly enjoyable romp should love Al-Qadim.

IT'S A BIT LIKE...

Al-Qadim uses a similar viewpoint and control system to Dark Sun. However, deciding which is the better game is a matter down largely to personal preference. Dark Sun is definitely the 'heavier' of the two games, and will appeal more to hardened RPGers, while Al-Qadim is better suited to mainstream gamesplayers. I'm an Al-Qadim man myself, but they're both great games in their own rights.

AL-QADIM...



...A BEGINNER'S DARK SUN.

AL-QADIM: THE GENIE'S CURSE

US GOLD/SSI

(021) 625 3388

£35.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM and 16Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

joystick; mouse; Sound Blaster, Aria, GameWave, Pro Audio Spectrum, Soundscape, WaveBlaster and SoundCanvas soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Super-easy to get into — you don't have to be an RPG buff to enjoy this.
- Atmospheric and absorbing plot keeps you coming back for more.
- Lots of exciting, Indy Jones-like moments make this the most action-packed RPG *ever*!

...AND THE BAD

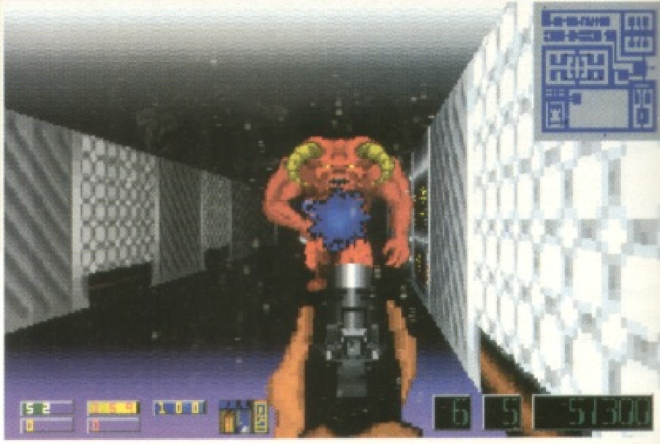
- Sound effects range from average to downright bloody awful.
- It doesn't take long to complete.
- Mouse control can be a little fiddly.

OVERALL

86%

Corridor 7

David Upchurch fears the alien in GameTek's would-be Doom beater.



Doom is, without doubt, the gaming phenomenon of the year. Every PC gamesplayer from Land's End to John o'Groats is going quite literally *bonkers* over Id Software's supremely playable and incredibly gorey slaughter-fest. Even besuited office workers, who have never played a game before in their lives, have been infected by the Doom bug, eating up network time late into the night and bringing whole companies to a stand-still.

And rightly so — Doom is, quite simply, superb.

But now here comes Corridor 7 from GameTek, the ads for which state that gamesplayers should "Prepare to *beat* thy Doom!" Ho-ho. It's a brave, bold, brazen statement — and, as it turns out, a rather stupid one; if Doom is the Rolls-Royce of shoot-'em-ups, then Corridor 7 is the Mini Metro with a dodgy axle.

Like Doom, Corridor 7 has a 'one man facing impossible odds'-style scenario, with the player cast as a lone soldier trying to infiltrate an underground research base which has been taken over by a horde of hideous xenomorphs (that's 'aliens' to you, mate). And, like Doom, there are various souped-up weapons to find, colour-coded passes to collect that permit you access to locked-off areas, extra ammo clips and medipacks to pick up and so on.

But that's where the similarities — especially in terms of quality — end.

For a start — and most damningly — Corridor 7 severely lacks what Doom has in steaming spades: excitement. This is largely due to the nature of your alien foes, which are a pathetic and uninspiring bunch both to look at and to fight.

The poor wretches mill around aimlessly and react to your intruding presence with all the intelligence of a fruit salad with a deathwish, dutifully lining up in your gunsight to be offed one by one. True, as the game progresses the nasties get slightly more interesting — some are invisible, for example — but chances are you'll have lost interest in playing long before you meet them.

Certainly, you never find yourself dreading what you'll find lurking around the next corner — in fact, at times you actually wish you *would* come across a room full to the brim with nasties, just to liven things up a bit. Indeed, the only nail-biting you'll do in this game is when you ponder on how much better you could've spent your cash...

And graphically Corridor 7 is nowhere near as impressive as Doom. Since it's based on Wolfenstein 3D's aging game engine (which the developers licensed from Id Software) there are no vast arenas or multi-level chambers to explore, just endless, claustrophobic, tediously dull passages and rooms.

In fact, a better and fairer comparison is with Wolfenstein 3D, which has recently been commercially released at £19.99 — the same price as Corridor 7. But even then Corridor 7 doesn't come up to scratch — it lacks Wolfenstein's atmosphere and hasn't a jot of the tension. And, sorry, but pumping a poorly-drawn alien full of plasma just *isn't* as much fun as filling a Nazi full of lead.

If you've escaped Castle Wolfenstein and been to Hell and back with Doom, and are desperate for more 3D mayhem, then you might get some fun out of this.

But *please* remember that I did say 'might'...

CORRIDOR 7

GAMETEK/CAPSTONE

(0753) 553445

£19.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM and 8Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards.

THE GOOD...

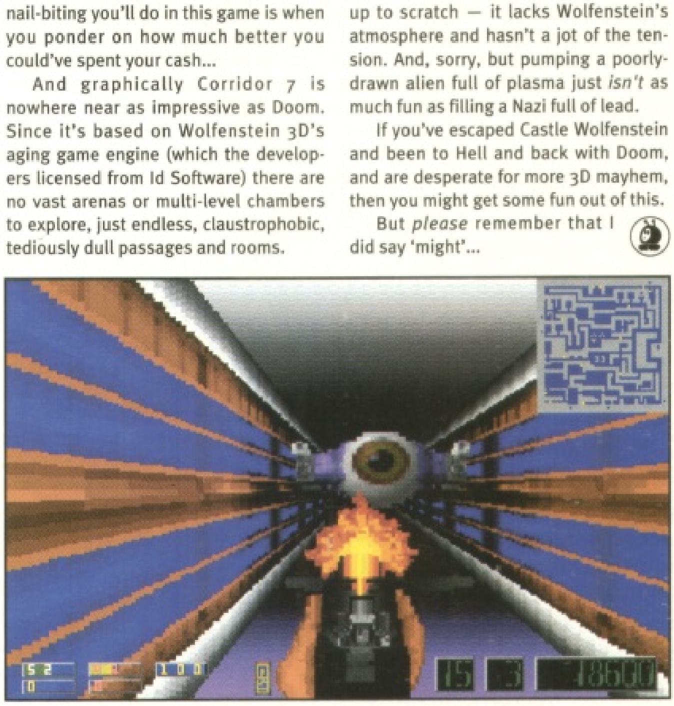
- Corridor 7's thirty big levels means that potentially you could be bug-hunting for *ages*.

...AND THE BAD

- ...Though whether you'll be interested enough to battle past even the first few is doubtful.
- Woefully unexciting to play, with precious little atmosphere.
- Dreadful graphics, which are either drab 'n' dreary or nauseatingly gaudy without ever being good.

OVERALL

38%



(Top) Some of the tougher nasties, like this behorned red beast, drop beefier weapons when downed.

(Above) Corridor 7's interior decorator shouldn't be sacked — he should be shot.

(Left) The plot is explained by means of an attractive rendered intro.

SimCity 2000 Scenarios Vol. 1: Great Disasters

Man the barricades! Alex Fraser has got to save 10 cities from doom and destruction.

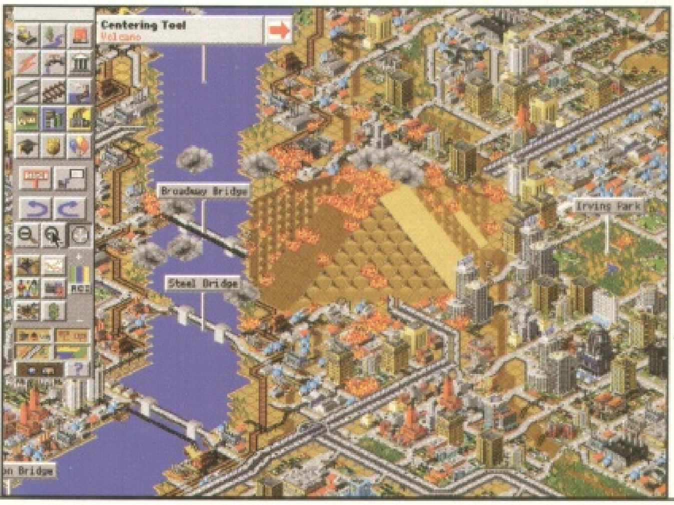
There's something rather heart-rending about building up your city over a number of weeks, only to see the primest bit of real estate flattened in an earthquake. Much better to let fire, flood and the four horsemen of the Apocalypse trample all over a ready-made city that you *haven't* nurtured and tended yourself. If you've gone through the five scenarios which came in the original SimCity 2000, or — like me — found them a bit dull, Maxis has produced ten more in this add-on scenario disk.

Some of these ten are based on real-life catastrophes, such as the earthquake and fires in San Francisco, flooding in Iowa and firestorms in Malibu. Others have been set up with Maxis's tongue firmly lodged in its cheek: rioting lawyers in Washington DC, an alien apparition in Atlanta and (my favourite) nuclear meltdown in Manhattan.

Load up each scenario and the disaster will strike immediately. You have a set task in each, which is usually to put out the fires (most of the disasters end up spreading fire throughout your city) and increase the population by a certain amount in a limited time period. Succeed and you can continue playing the city just as you would in 'normal' SimCity 2000; fail, and you'll be kicked out as mayor and the game ends.

The new scenarios vary both in difficulty and interest. I can't get terribly excited about the Florida hurricane or the pollution in Chicago, and the monster always seems to promise more than it delivers. But the lawyers are fun, the volcano eruption in Portland, Oregon, is pretty devastating, and the nuclear accident in Manhattan is great to watch — and very difficult.

Not an essential purchase, then, but if you feel you've gone as far as you can with the original game, this could give it a new lease of life.



SIMCITY 2000 SCENARIOS VOL. 1: GREAT DISASTERS

MAXIS/IN-HOUSE

(071) 490 1323

£14.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

25MHz 386, SVGA, 4Mb RAM, 1.5Mb of hard disk space, mouse and SimCity 2000.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

mouse; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Roland and Pro Audio Spectrum soundcards.

THE ***GOOD...***

- Well, it's more SimCity, isn't it?

...AND THE ***BAD***

- Sometimes achievingyour goals means doing things that aren't necessarily the best for the city as a whole.

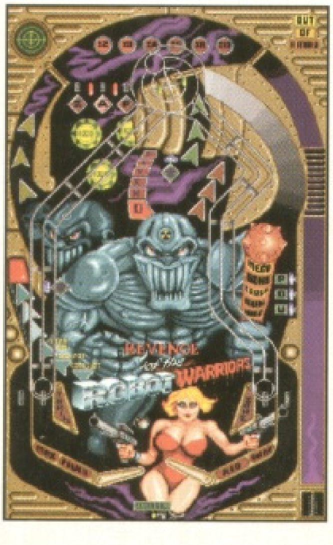
OVERALL

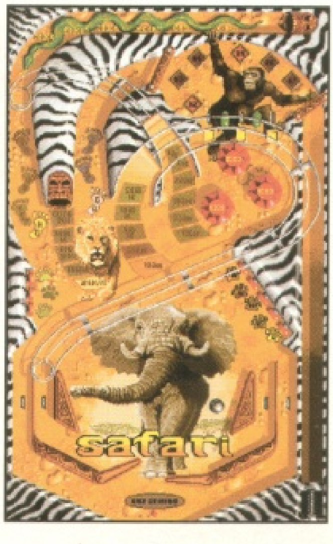
75%

Pinball Dreams 2

David Upchurch does his Tommy impression with 21st Century's pinball sequel.

Given the massive success of Pinball Dreams and Pinball Fantasies, and the fact that the next 'true' sequel, Pinball Illusions, won't be ready for months, it's no great surprise that 21st Century has decided to release this add-on data disk to keep silver ball fans sated.





So what do you get for your £19.99? Four brand-spanking-new tables, that's what, namely jungle japes in Safari (my favourite), aquatic treasure-hunting in Neptune, 50s B-Movie mayhem in Revenge Of The Robot Warriors and aviation antics in Stall Turn.

Being a mere data disk, Pinball Dreams 2's big problem is exactly the same as the one that beset the first game, namely that it falls between two stools. On the one hand, the game doesn't take any advantage of the fact that it's pinball on a computer — Dragon's Fury on the Megadrive, for example, boasts all manner of strange and imaginative features that you could only ever see on a computerised table, such as warps and secret chambers.

On the other hand, however, any fans of 'real' pinball — such as my good self — will find the tables fairly primitive by modern standards; there's no multi-ball play, for instance, and there aren't even any video mode features, which are practically *de rigeur* nowadays and something you'd think it'd be a breeze to program in.

Still, for all that, Pinball Dreams — and, by definition, Pinball Dreams 2 — is still very enjoyable and amazingly addictive to play, and it's certainly the closest anyone's ever come to emulating the authentic feel of a pinball table on a computer.

So is Pinball Dreams 2 worth buying? *Weeeell*, maybe. Agreed, the four new tables are entertaining; it's just a pity they don't have any new features or enhancements. At the end of the day the buying decision is really up to you — just how much *do* you like pinball? Still, with each table effectively costing less than a fiver, it's certainly a damn sight cheaper than going down the arcade...

PINBALL DREAMS 2

21ST CENTURY/SPIDERSOFT

(0235) 851473

£19.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

20MHz 286, VGA, 2Mb RAM, 2.2Mb of hard disk space and Pinball Dreams.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Thunderboard, Pro Audio Spectrum, VoiceMaster and SoundMaster II soundcards.

THE ***GOOD...***

- The four tables, while not offering anything new, are still fun to play.

...AND THE ***BAD***

- If you're looking for innovations, you've come to the wrong place.

OVERALL

80%

review

The Horde CD

David Upchurch finally meets a match for his gluttony in the latest from US Gold.

Life had not been kind to young Chauncey. For a start there was his name. Then there was his job — much-maligned, oft-kicked scullion at the palace of Good King Winthrop, where their idea of a good laugh was to throw the lad into the moat and then dry him off with a few turns on the kitchen spit.

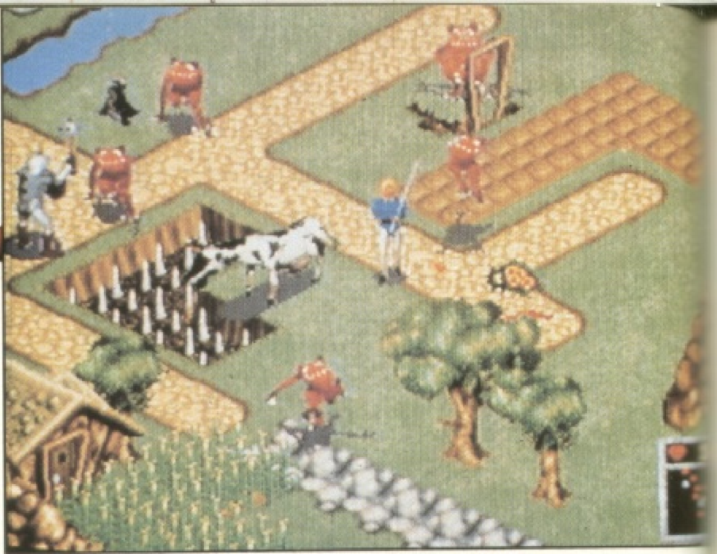
But Chauncey's days of servitude and singed body hair are behind him now, because he's just saved the King's life — in an incident involving a tricky morsel of boar-haunch and a Heimlich Manoeuvre — and has been richly rewarded with a knighthood and a sizable tract of farming land.

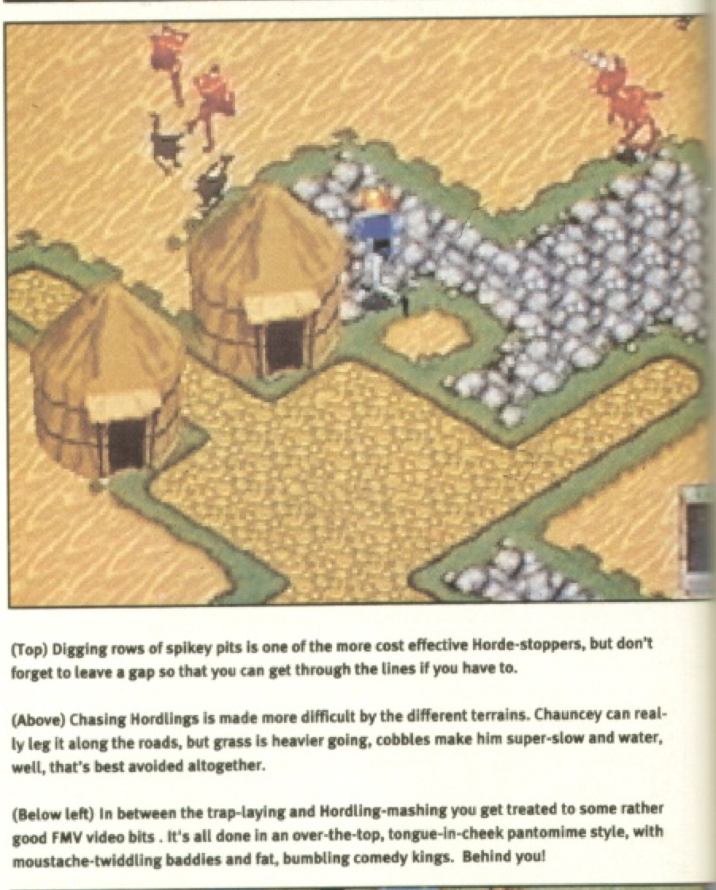
Thus the stage is set (via quarter-screen, full-motion, panto video — except for the kitchen spit part, which I made up) for The Horde, a game of building up townships, making money out of them and then fighting off the vile monsters who want to suck them dry.

As the game begins Chauncey is master of two huts in the middle of a field, but with each passing game-season (four of which make up a game-year) more and more farmers turn up and plant their pumpkin patch in his village, which is good because 'More crops = more cash' in the Royal Bank Of Chauncey at the end of the year.

All this would be great if it wasn't for the Horde; gangs of ravenous red monsters which rampage into town at the end of each season looking for food. They steal the crops, eat the villagers and poison the land unless you stop them first.

At the start of each season you get two minutes to lay defences around Chauncey's isometric-3D village. Using the icon-driven tool box it's easy to dig rows of spike-lined trenches or build fences, but the catch is that it all costs cash. Not surprisingly the cheap stuff is ineffective and nigh-on useless, while the more useful techniques of building stone walls and hiring armies of knights or archers require bankfuls of big bucks, so you can't

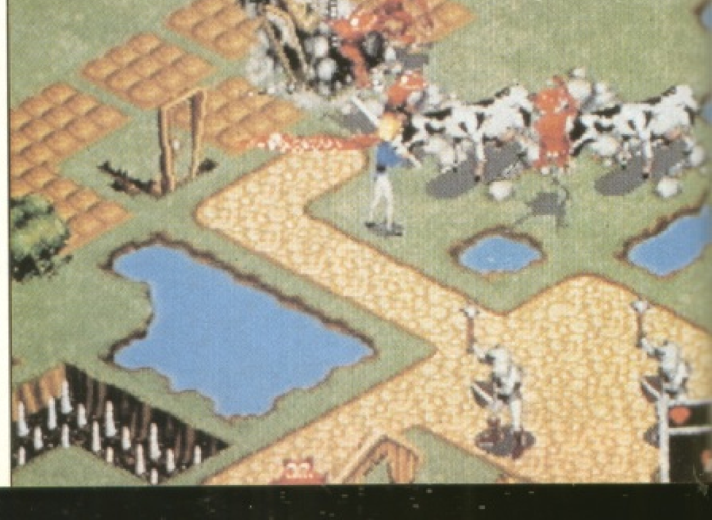




(Top) Digging rows of spikey pits is one of the more cost effective Horde-stoppers, but don't forget to leave a gap so that you can get through the lines if you have to.

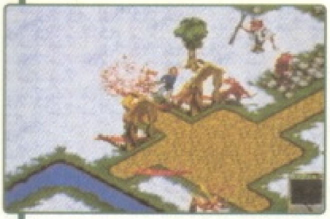
(Above) Chasing Hordlings is made more difficult by the different terrains. Chauncey can really leg it along the roads, but grass is heavier going, cobbles make him super-slow and water, well, that's best avoided altogether.

(Below left) In between the trap-laying and Hordling-mashing you get treated to some rather good FMV video bits . It's all done in an over-the-top, tongue-in-cheek pantomime style, with moustache-twiddling baddies and fat, bumbling comedy kings. Behind you!



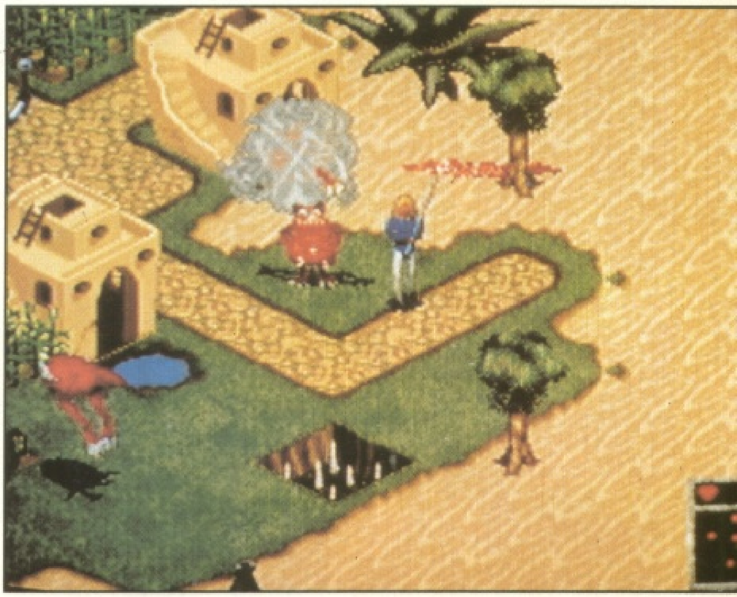
IT'S A BIT LIKE...

Not obvious, this. After a first glance you're expecting this to be something like a medieval Sim City, but the gameplay actually has more in common with Domark's conversion of the Ramparts coin-op. Spend a limited amount of time strategically building up your defenses, then spend another few frenetically trying to stop them being knocked down again. How odd.



THE HORDE...

...FANTASTIC RAMPARTS?



(Above) Surely there must be easier ways for a young knight to earn a fortune that battling blood-thirsty monsters year in, year out?

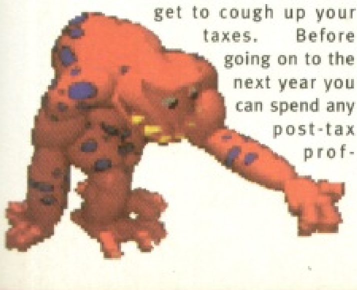
expect to surround the whole village.

When your two minutes are up, the sound of a hunting horn warns you that the Horde is on its way. At this point you take direct control of Sir Chauncey and his oversized sword, Grimthwacker. A quick check of the Eagle's Eye Map shows where the Hordlings are coming from, and you have to send Chauncey to meet any that break through the defences, then chop them up before they can do any damage.

Of course, if Chauncey gets too close to a Hordling it'll start chewing on him, guzzling his energy points until he either cops it (GAME OVER) or he gives it some sword. You can't afford to go into a blade frenzy, though, because the more Chauncey swings his sword the dizzier he gets and over-indulgence results in him staggering about uncontrollably — disastrous if he's tackling one of the bigger Hordlings at the time.

You see, Hordlings come in several shapes and sizes, ranging from the soppy skipping ones which hang around on the first few levels, to the almost unstoppable Juggernauts which can smash down walls and walk over spikey pits. Others include Digger Hordlings which burrow up inside your defences unless you find their hole and fill it in, and the Shaman Hordlings, which teleport around the village, shooting fireballs.

Anyway, survive an attack and your income from crops, cows and villagers is totted up. Survive a whole year and you get to cough up your taxes. Before going on to the next year you can spend any post-tax profits on new gizmos in ye shoppe, things like bombs, magical healing stones and flame throwers.

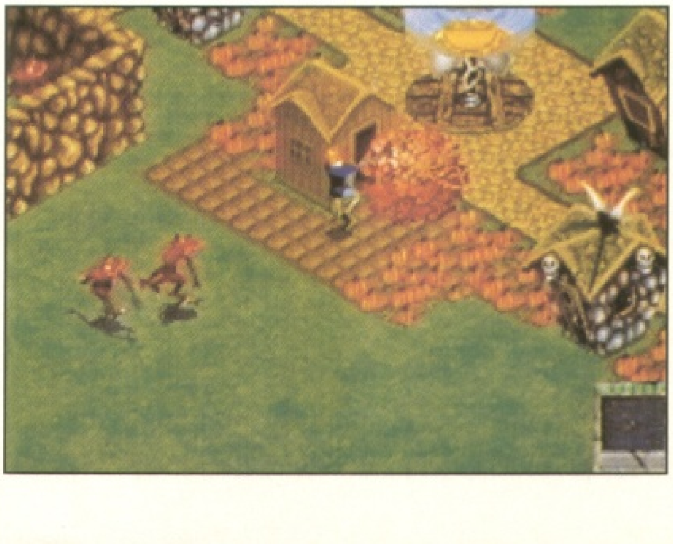


You really can't afford to waste any cash in The Horde, because every four years the king presents Chauncey with another territory which he has to build up from nothing. There are only five different territories but after a week of play I only got as far as the second, and I was surprised and impressed to find that rather than having to tackle more of exactly the same stuff I did actually have to work out some new tactics to stay in the black.

By this time I was genuinely impressed by The Horde. It all looks a bit silly and simplistic to start off with, but all three aspects of the gameplay — the spendthriftiness, constructing the defences and the swordplay action — all have their own challenges and subtleties which you only discover after a few hours of play.

And just when you think you've got everything sussed an FMV window pops up to tell you about a random bonus or disaster which will affect how you play the next bit. The full-motion video is actually very good; not particularly well-acted, of course, but the panto style, with the bumptious king and the evil, moustachioed, tax-grabbing chancellor, do add a lot to the comical atmosphere. Likewise, the in-game graphics are excellent and, hell, even the sampled sound effects are impressive.

I honestly didn't expect much from The Horde, but it's turned out to be one of those nice reviewer surprises: no hype and no licence, just good, honest, monster-slicing fun.



THE HORDE CD

US GOLD/CRYSTAL DYNAMICS

(021) 625 3366

£44.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse and joystick.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Gravis Ultrasound, Microsoft Sound Board, Microsoft Windows Audio and Convox Soundmaster soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Simple fun and a surprising amount of variety and challenge throughout the game.
- Jolly graphics and sound effects.
- Good use of full-motion video bits.

...AND THE BAD

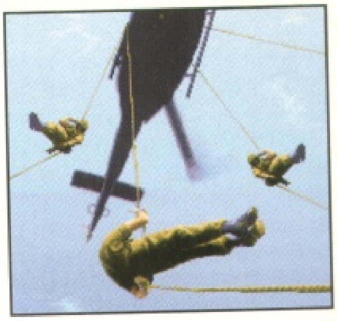
- Maybe won't hold much appeal for your high-brow Sim City 2000 fan.
- Doesn't work with certain Sound Blaster-emulating cards.

OVERALL

80%

Sabre Team

Alex Fraser looks good in a balaclava, which is why he reviewed Krisalis' SAS sim.



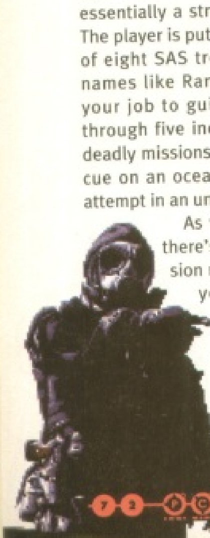
If you've got armed terrorists holding innocent people captive in an embassy and, worse, they are threatening to kill a hostage every hour, on the hour, unless their lunatic demands are met, it takes a little more than the local bobby wielding a truncheon to sort things out.

What you need are men trained to the peak of physical fitness. Men who are skilled marksmen and capable of killing with their bare hands. Men highly trained in the secret arts of survival. Men who can cook a nutritious stew out of mouldy twigs, rabbit droppings and just about anything else they find lying about.

In short, you need the SAS.

And now, thanks to Sabre Team from Krisalis, you have the opportunity to don the famed black balaclava and to find out what it's like to be one of the world's most respected and feared fighting men. In fact, *so* authentic is this simulation that you're even provided with recipes for several 'in the field' culinary delights, such as cowpat kebab and nettle surprise. (Are you sure about this? — Ed.)

Despite the game's resemblance to an isometric-3D arcade game, it's essentially a strategy-orientated affair. The player is put in command of a squad of eight SAS troopers with rock-hard names like Ramo and Jelico, and it's your job to guide them successfully through five increasingly difficult and deadly missions, such as a hostage rescue on an ocean liner and a sabotage attempt in an underground enemy base.



As with all strategy games, there's plenty of arduous decision making to endure before you even get a *whiff* of action. For a start, only a maximum of four soldiers can take part in each mission, and it's up to you to select which lucky lads venture out, bearing in mind the stats for each member which govern their stamina, strength, marksmanship and so on.

Once that's all been decided, you then have to equip them as best you can from the limited number of guns, grenades, gas masks, etc, in your armoury. Fortunately, however, you can replenish your arsenal during each mission by collecting equipment from slain terrorists.

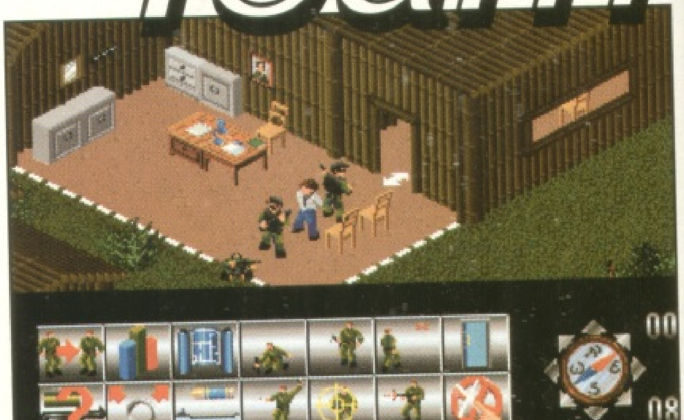
Although these restrictions on the amount of equipment available 'works' from a gameplay point-of-view, it hardly adds to the game's authenticity — I mean, it's hard to believe that the SAS, scourge of terrorists everywhere, only have a measly two medi-packs in stock!

Anyway, at long last the action begins — and if you're sensible you'll save the game straight away to avoid having to go through the laborious set-up procedure again.

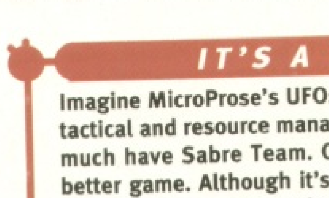
Play takes place in boardgame-style 'turns'. Each team member has a limited number of 'action points' which you can 'spend' to make them perform actions ranging from simply walking or opening a door to firing a gun or throwing a grenade. *Everything* you do costs action points — even turning slightly on the spot! — and as you can't change your mind after the event you have to plan your moves wisely.

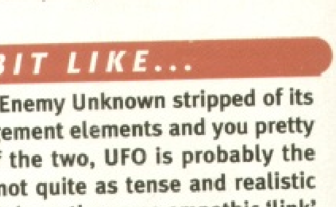
Once you've finished directing your team, you end your turn and the computer gets the opportunity to move the enemy. Of course, you can't actually *see* what the computer's up to, although you can *hear* the results of certain actions, i.e when the enemy opens doors.

Should the enemy move into your team's visual range, and assuming you haven't spent all of your turn's action



Once a hostage has been found, they become a part of your team with their own set of action points. However, all they're allowed to do is move — they can't operate a gun or even open a door on their own.

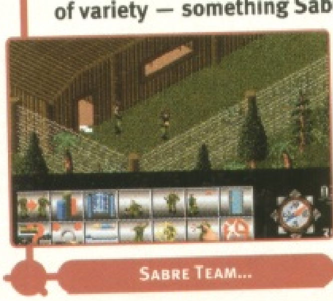




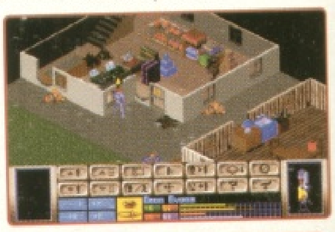
Having selected your 'away team' of four from the eight soldiers available (above left), you must then equip them from the wide range of goodies available in the armoury (above right). Each weapon has its own performance qualities and specific pros and cons.

IT'S A BIT LIKE...

Imagine MicroProse's UFO: Enemy Unknown stripped of its tactical and resource management elements and you pretty much have Sabre Team. Of the two, UFO is probably the better game. Although it's not quite as tense and realistic as Sabre Team and you don't have the same empathic 'link' with the characters, the overall task of saving the world from alien invaders is far more interesting and offers plenty of variety — something Sabre Team seriously lacks.

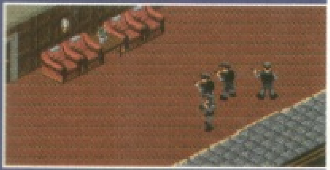


SABRE TEAM...

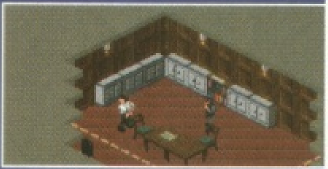


...AN EARTHBOUND UFO?

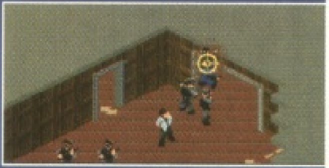
SAVE *ME!*



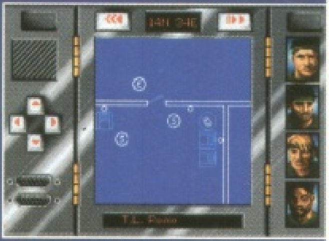
Terrorists have taken over a foreign embassy and are holding its occupants hostage. Hmmm, sounds like a job for the SAS! The Sabre Team enters the building...



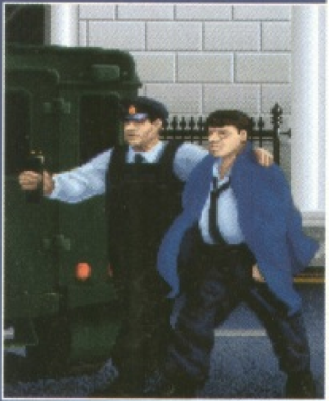
Slowly but surely the team explore the embassy. It doesn't take them long to find one of the terrified hostages — all they've got to do now is escort him to safety...



The terrorists strike! Luckily Ramo has sufficient action points held in reserve to allow him to perform an opportunity move. Ramo raises his machine gun, aims and fires...



The display cuts to a plan view of Ramo's surroundings, and shows his bullet's path through the air. It hits! The terrorist gives a strangled yelp of surprise and falls...



The hostage is safely delivered to the police surrounding the embassy — now the team have got to go back and rescue the rest. Hey, no-one said this was going to be easy...

points, you'll be awarded with an 'opportunity move', which basically gives you a chance to get them before they get you.

The whole system is cleverly and sensibly thought-out, with everything behaving in a logically interlinked fashion: for example, the more equipment a team member carries the more action points they'll expend moving; injured players have a reduced number of action points depending on how seriously they're injured, thus limiting what they can do; firing a un-silenced gun attracts the attention of any enemy nearby; and so on and so forth.

This can all make for some intensely nerve-wracking play as you edge slowly through the corridors, desperately trying to keep all possible angles of attack covered. The atmosphere is further heightened by the pulsing, low-key music and the occasional snatches of digitised speech informing you in urgent (and slightly hammy) tones that "Teather has been taken out!".

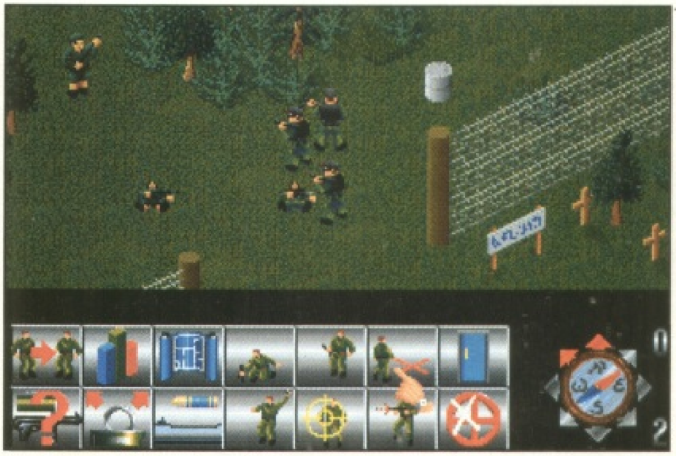
Unfortunately, Sabre Team also invloves long periods of extreme tedium. This being a fairly realistic simulation of close-quarters combat, two or three bullets is all it takes to kill a team member. Thus the wise player will always keep a number of action points in reserve in case he encounters any surprise attacks.

Consequently there's not a lot you can do each turn — at least, not if you want to survive longer than a couple of minutes. While this doesn't matter so much in the early and middle stages of each mission when there's plenty of enemy threat, towards the end play can become a chore as you shuffle slowly along. Even though you may have finished off the bulk of the enemy you can't take any risks — get caught with your pants down and you may end up with your whole team slaughtered in a matter of seconds.

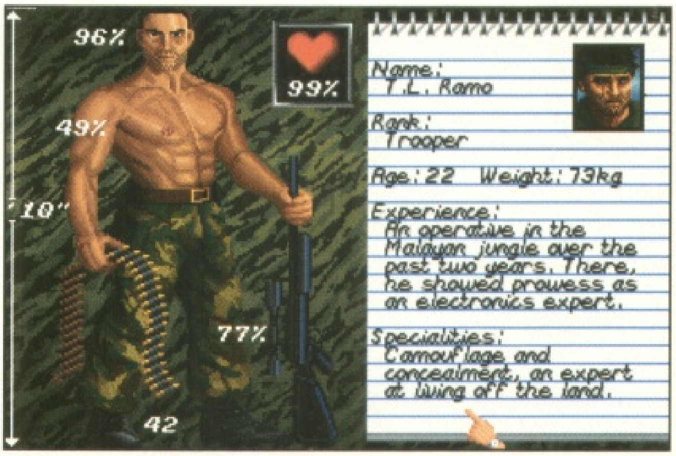
Another major problem is the lack of variety. Each mission is pretty much just more of the same and it's fair to say that once you've played the first one you've seen just about everything the game has to offer.

On top of all this, and for all the game's tense moments, you're never really convinced that playing Sabre Team gives you a good idea of what it's like to be in the SAS. This is partly due to the occasional atmospheric lapses, like the ridiculous clip-clopping noise you hear whenever a team member walks, but mainly due to the isometric-3D view, which removes the player from the action somewhat — a Doom-style first-person 3D view would've been much more effective.

Still, for all these faults, Sabre Team is an absorbing and very accessible game. Provided you can weather the dull bits and don't mind a stiff challenge, it comes highly recommended.



Your team are controlled using a simple icon-based control system. Although it's reasonably easy-to-use, a 'Cancel Last Order' option would've been appreciated, especially as action points are so precious — as it is, mistakes can't be rectified.



Name:
T.L. Ramo

Rank:
Trooper

Age: 22 Weight: 73kg

Experience:
An operative in the Malayan jungle over the past two years. There, he showed prowess as an electronics expert.

Specialities:
Camouflage and concealment, an expert at living off the land.

If there are stats then you can bet it's a strategy game, and vice versa. When selecting your team you can call up a screen like this for every trooper in your squad, allowing you to pick the right men for the right job.

SABRE TEAM

Krisalis/In-house

(0709) 372290

£29.99 Out Now

MINIMUM **SPEC**

25MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM and 8Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Although generally slow-paced, there are moments when Sabre Team is extremely exciting.
- An involving, long-term challenge.

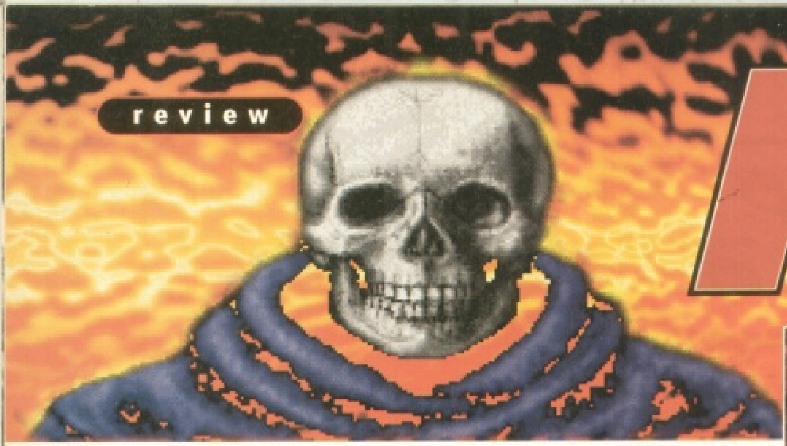
...AND THE BAD

- Never *really* succeeds in conveying an authentic feeling of what being in the SAS must be like.
- The gameplay suffers from a lack of real variety.
- Very tough, even in 'easy' mode — one slight mistake can spell disaster.

OVERALL

77%

Hexx



Alex Fraser beckons you into the world where Psygnosis so rarely venture... the land of duff RPGs.

Renegade wizard... Traps four magical gods in crystals... Party of four adventurers hunt through scrolling 3D maze citadel-type thing... Find crystals... Release gods... Find wizard... Do him over... You win.

There you go. The plot of Psygnosis' Ultima Underworld looky-likey in a nutshell. But lazy old me, I'm only calling Hexx — formerly known as Wizard — an Underworld looky-likey because it has rotating, scrolling, texture-mapped 3D scenery. I do apologise because, after all, there's so much more to Underworld... and so much less to Hexx.

Let's start with that scenery. Rather than having a credible environment like Ultima Underworld's, made up of corridors, open spaces and large halls, Hexx's 'landscape' is merely a grid-like maze made up of very similar rooms which all have the same stony wallpaper. Of course, not only does that make it harder to find your way around, it also makes the game very dull to look at.

The gameplay fundamentals are equally uninspiring, and making progress is mainly a matter of finding the right key for the right door, going through that door to another door, then finding the key for that door which probably leads to a key. And a door, behind which is a key. And so — tediously — on...

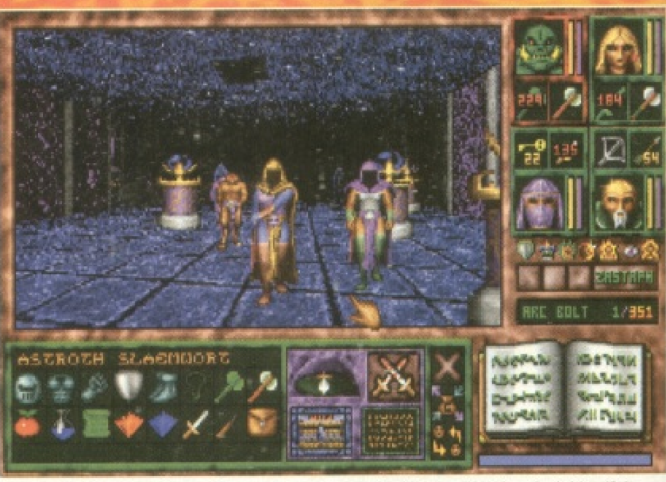
Puzzles — real puzzles, that is — are thin on the ground and the only thing I found puzzling in the first two levels of the game amounted to flicking a bunch of switches repeatedly (no logic required, apparently) until an exit-blocking candelabra disappeared.

Mind you, equally bewildering is the way that, if you try to use a key on a door, the key sometimes disappears THROUGH the door without actually unlocking it, leaving you stuck on the other side. If that was the only key you had you're forced to start again from a saved position.

Things are barely livened up by a monster lurching at you out of the darkness. Nervous players will be relieved to hear that some rather dismal graphic work means that there's little to fear from the sight of these denizens of the lower worlds. Some look like ladies in full-length dressing gowns (I'd say they were witches, though, judging by their glowing blue hands), while the ubiquitous ratmen appear to be escapees from a Euro-Disney parade.

Beating these things off is made easier by the use of an auto-combat button which gets your whole party to use their ready weapons or spells on the nearest monster. Useful is this, because there's no way you could match the speed of the bad guys' blows in a hand-to-hand fight. In fact, the best way to make any progress is to get a crossbow, spend all your cash on bolts and keep shooting the monsters before they get close enough to draw their swords.

And so, with the evidence laid bare and the space running out, we come to the conclusion that Hexx isn't very good. Come to think of it, nearly every 3D RPG I've every played, right from Dungeon Master and the first Eye Of The Beholder, has been more entertaining and atmospheric than this one, and there's no reason for any thinking being to buy Hexx in preference to any of the current crop of excellent graphic adventures. Can I kick it off my hard drive now, Dave?



(Above) Hexx's gameplay is largely combat orientated, which wouldn't be a bad thing if the combat was enjoyable. Sadly, however, it isn't.

HEXX

Psygnosis/In-house

(051) 709 5755

£TBA Out Now

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 580K, 2Mb RAM and 2.5Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Adlib, Sound Blaster, Roland and Gravis Ultra Sound soundcards.

THE GOOD...

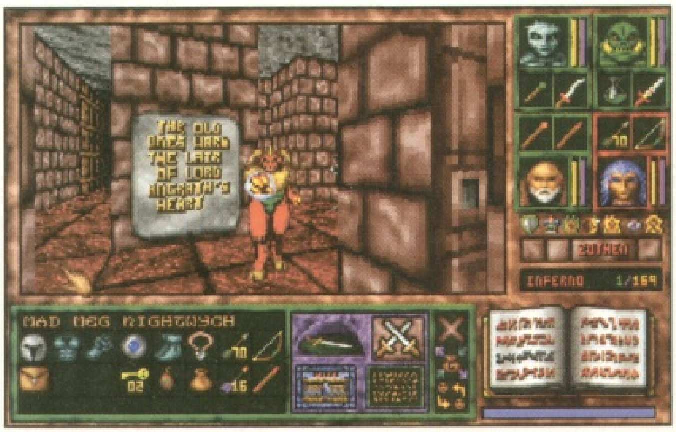
- Well... uh... It's sort of tolerable if, like lucky me, you haven't paid for it.
- The story in the manual is quite well written.

...AND THE BAD

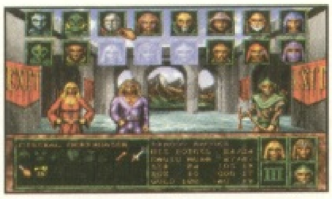
- Gameplay is simplistic and dull.
- Puzzles are feeble and the combat system is flawed.
- Graphics are surprisingly poor for a Psygnosis title, with chunky characters and super-bland scenery.
- Zero atmosphere.

OVERALL

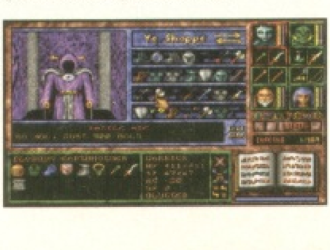
44%



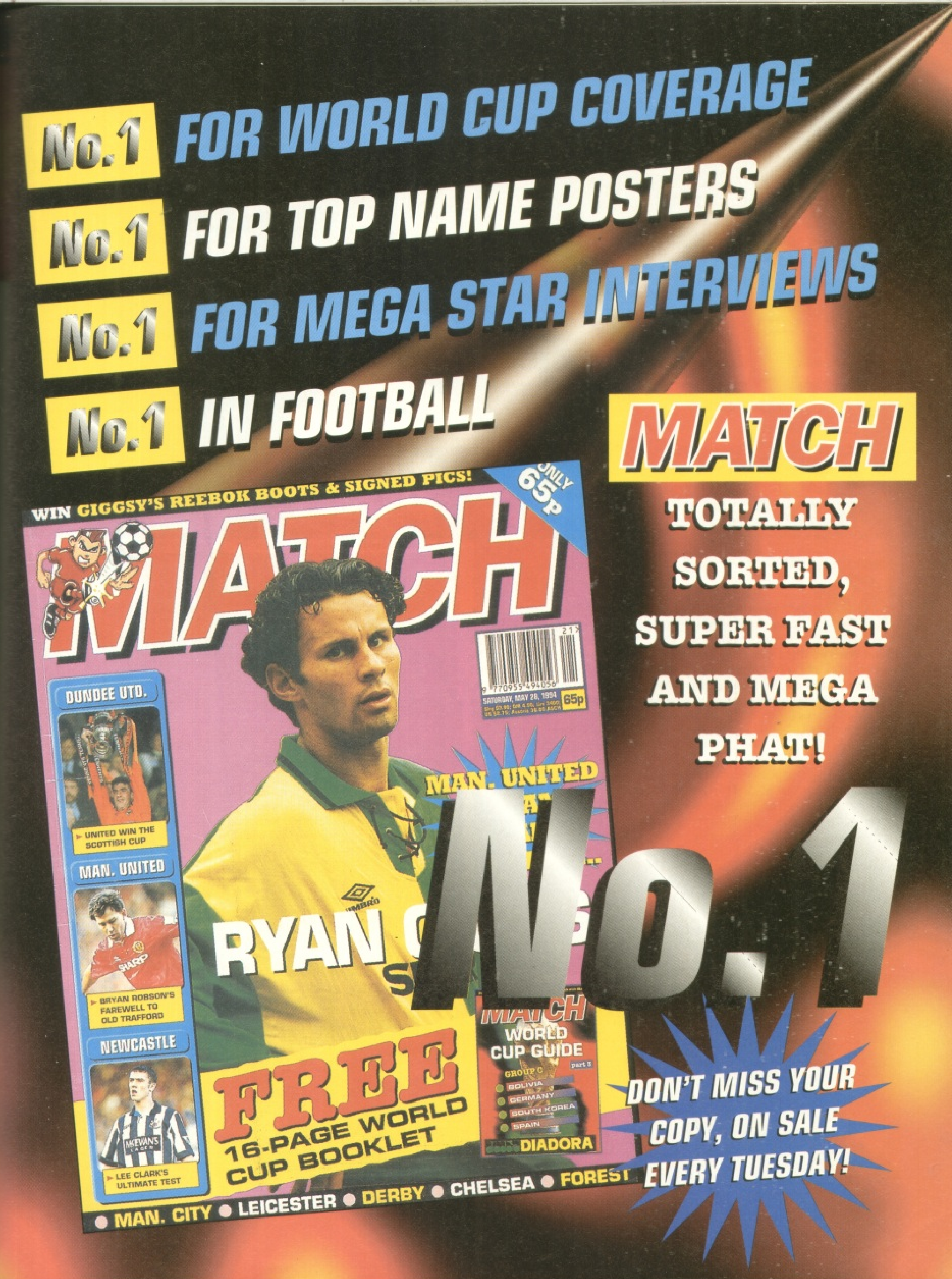
(Above) Remember: walls have ears — or, in Hexx's case, large-print notices.



(Above) At the start of the game you get to pick your team of four from the 16 characters available. Each is either a wizard, warrior, ranger or an assassin (who are apparently good at attacking from behind).



(Right) Shops are all over the place, some selling weapons and armour while others hawk potions and spells. Shopkeepers are the only friendly faces you see in the whole game.



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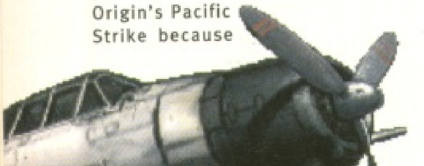
PC GAMES STAR

1942: Pacific Air War

"Shot down, in a blaze of glory," sang Dean Evans as his fragile Corsair became a raging fireball in MicroProse's 1942: Pacific Air War.

You know there's something altogether satisfying about a World War Two flight sim. Okay, jets may be sleek and sexy but they're far too fast and, after a while, blowing up a radar blip with a Sidewinder really isn't that much fun. As for World War One planes, they're just that bit too slow for my liking — it's like flying a shed that's got a pistol strapped to it.

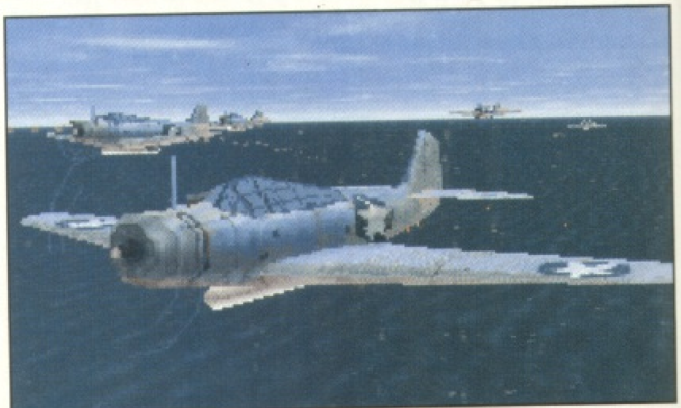
So when it comes to flight sims, I'm a World War Two kind of guy. There's nothing like cranking up your Wildcat, taking to the air, dogging a Japanese fighter through the cloud layer and then blowing its wings off with a burst from your six 50mm machine guns. Forget Origin's Pacific Strike because MicroProse's new flight sim, 1942: Pacific Air War, is here and trounces it in every department.



Like Pacific Strike, 1942: Pacific Air War is a World War Two flight sim set after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. Simply put, it recreates the missions and the challenges facing both the Americans and the Japanese (yes, you can play the bad guys as well) as their huge aircraft carriers threw flimsy planes at each other in the middle of the Pacific ocean. This was America's Battle Of Britain and, like the RAF over England, the US nearly lost it.

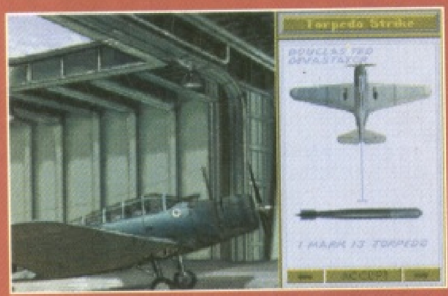
Now the best Pacific flight sim for my money was Sierra's Aces Over The Pacific, an uncomplicated and very playable flight sim that would run on anything from a 486 down to a Casio steam-powered calculator.

AOTP was a huge success, mixing elements of both the 'hefty' flight sim (realistic flight models, weapon jams, limited fuel etc) and the less-involved 'flight game' (left, right, up, down, shoot) into one package. As a result it appealed to just about everyone. It was highly playable, it worked on a number of levels, was easy to use and so polished you could almost see your face in it.

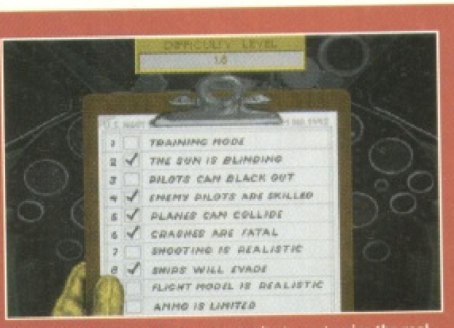


One of the nice things about Pacific Air War is the fact that you are not alone. There's a feeling of solidarity as you and your fellow pilots head bravely for a showdown with the enemy.

PAW does all this too but does it much better. The programmers at MicroProse seem to have taken the bare bones of Aces Of The Pacific and added all the modern flight sim trappings. You've got your Gouraud-shaded graphics, a virtual cockpit, a multitude of external views, mission replays, two types of campaign option and even a mission builder in case you get bored. PAW has everything that Aces had and more. In fact, PAW also has everything

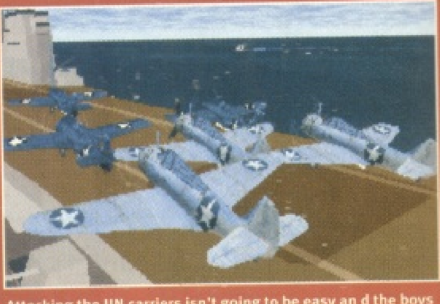


It's May 6th, 1942, and the top brass has ordered an all-out strike against the Japanese Task Force. At the arming screen you can choose your payload. Bombs? No, I fancy a torpedo.



1 ☐ TRAINING MODE
2 ☑ THE SUN IS BLINDING
3 ☐ PILOTS CAN BLACK OUT
4 ☑ ENEMY PILOTS ARE SKILLED
5 ☑ PLANES CAN COLLIDE
6 ☑ CRASHES ARE FATAL
7 ☐ SHOOTING IS REALISTIC
8 ☑ SHIPS WILL EVADE
☐ FLIGHT MODEL IS REALISTIC
☐ AMMO IS LIMITED

Before take off you get the opportunity to customise the realism of the mission. Now I prefer fun to realism so I switch off blackouts and limited ammo. Okay, who shouted "wimp"?



Attacking the IJN carriers isn't going to be easy an d the boys and I are glad that we've got three Wildcats as an escort. Don't try dogfighting in a bomber — it's like flying a brick.

that Pacific Strike has and more. Except, of course, for the talky bits.

Okay, if you imagine for a moment that PAW is a dessert... what makes it a hot fudge sundae while Pacific Strike is a Granny Smith with clumps of fluffy mould on it? Why, in short, should you shell out ú45 for this particular flight sim?

Well, there are several reasons. First, it looks good. The main gripe I had about Pacific Strike was that it was so ugly and blocky. The sea was blocky, the sky was blocky, it looked like a two-year-old had been let loose in the Origin graphics department with a set of crayons.

In contrast, the planes and the detail in PAW are crisp and clear and as a result the actual flying seems far more realistic. Granted, in certain respects the graphic detail isn't as elaborate as Pacific Strike, but on a purely aesthetic level PAW wins hands down.

After the nicely-animated intro sequence, probably the best way to get airborne is to skip past the Carrier Battles and the Career options (I'll get to them in a minute) and to pick Fly Single Mission which allows you to fly a sortie from any of the six mission categories: Fighter Sweep, CAP (Combat Air Patrol), Bomber Escort, Bomb Ship, Bomb Base and Torpedo Ship.

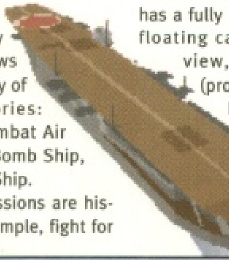
All of these single missions are historically accurate. For example, fight for the Americans and you could fly the Hornet's VFT2 pre-dawn fighter sweep of Buin (10th May 1942) or maybe risk life and limb as the Saratoga's torpedo bombers try to sink the Imperial Japanese Navy advance force (24th August 1942).

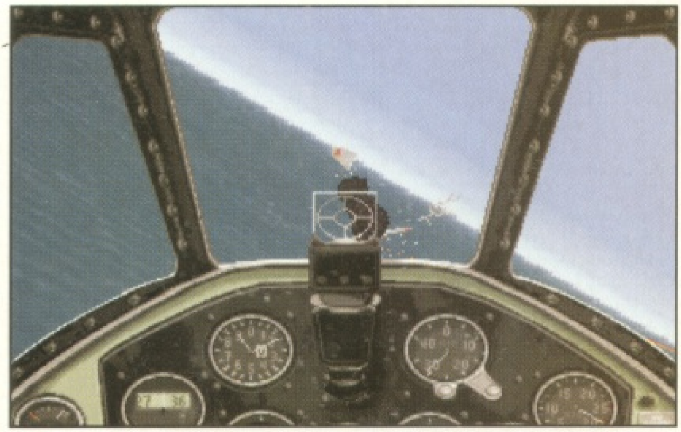
When you've picked your mission, you can then customise the way you play it, altering the weather conditions and even the realism of your flight model (i.e you can choose whether you want unlimited ammo, pilot blackouts, sun glare, evading ships, skilled enemy pilots and so on).

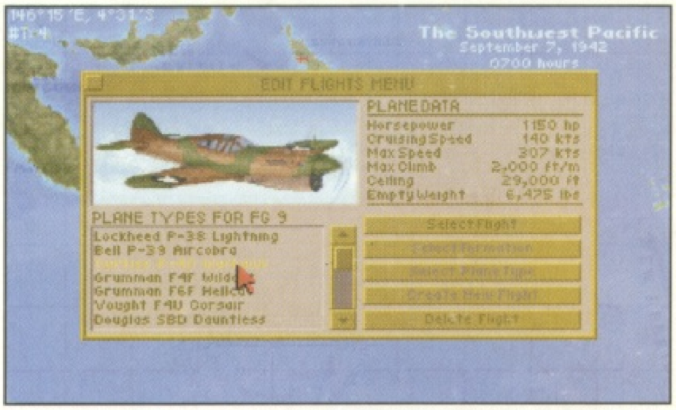
Switch all the options on and you can play PAW as a serious, fantastically-realistic flight sim, but if you just want to get up in the air to perform impossibly tight turns and to shoot things down, you can do that too.

Once up in the air, you can indulge yourself in nose-to-tail dogfighting, divebombing, torpedo dropping and even crashing with wild abandon. You can also start to play around with the external views because in addition to the usual left, right and rear views, PAW has a fully rotatable chase view, a free-floating camera view, a bomb-sight view, a rear-gunner's position (providing you're in a plane that has a rear gun, that is) and — phew! — if that wasn't enough, a rather nifty virtual cockpit view.

When finally you







146°15'E, 4°31'S
#1:4

The Southwest Pacific
September 7, 1942
0700 hours

EDIT FLIGHTS MENU

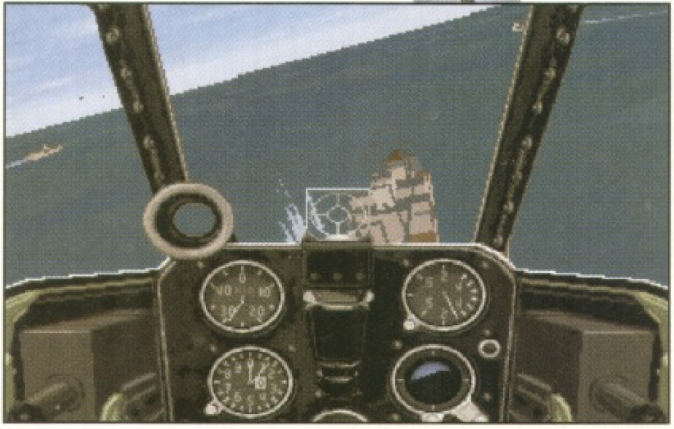
PLANE DATA

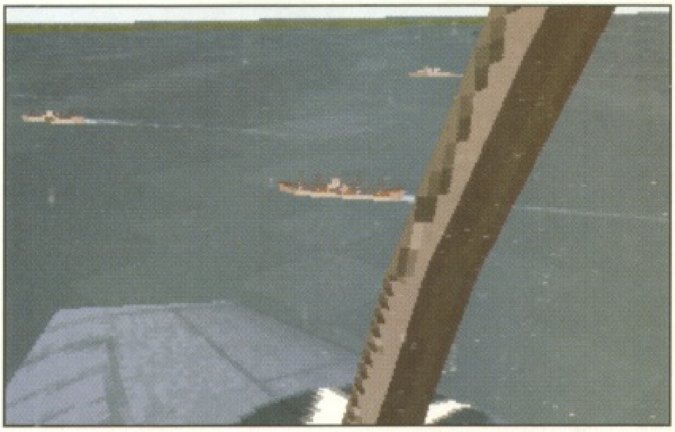
Horsepower	1150 hp
Cruising Speed	140 kts
Max Speed	307 kts
Max Climb	2,000 ft/m
Ceiling	29,000 ft
Empty Weight	6,475 lbs

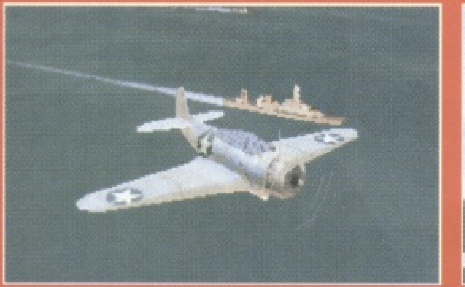
PLANE TYPES FOR FG 9

- Lockheed P-38 Lightning
- Bell P-39 Aircobra
- Curtiss P-40 Warhawk
- Grumman F4F Wild
- Grumman F6F Hellc
- Vought F4U Corsair
- Douglas SBD Dauntless

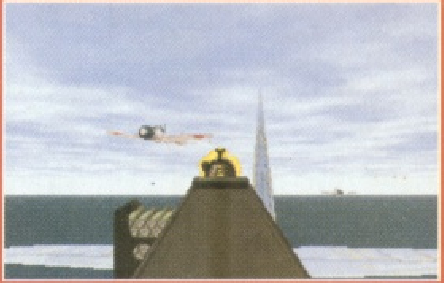
(Above) When you finally get bored of campaigns and carrier battles, you can also design your own custom missions using the PAW mission builder while the virtual cockpit view (below) allows you to scan the skies for Jap Zeros or to just watch your ships steam slowly by.



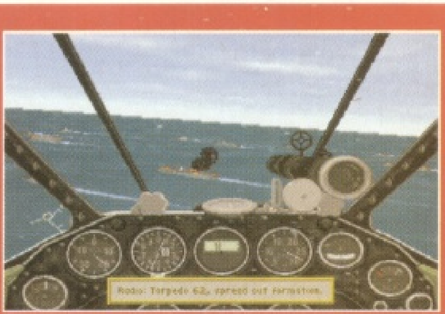




Flick on the external view, press 'A' to kick in the autopilot and at last we struggle into the air. It's a long flight but thankfully PAW has a time warp mode to speed things up.



Seven miles from the fleet and my flight gets jumped by four Japanese Zeros. All I can do is take hopeful pot-shots with the rear gun and hope that the Wildcats shoot them down.



Radio: Torpedo 62, spread out formation.

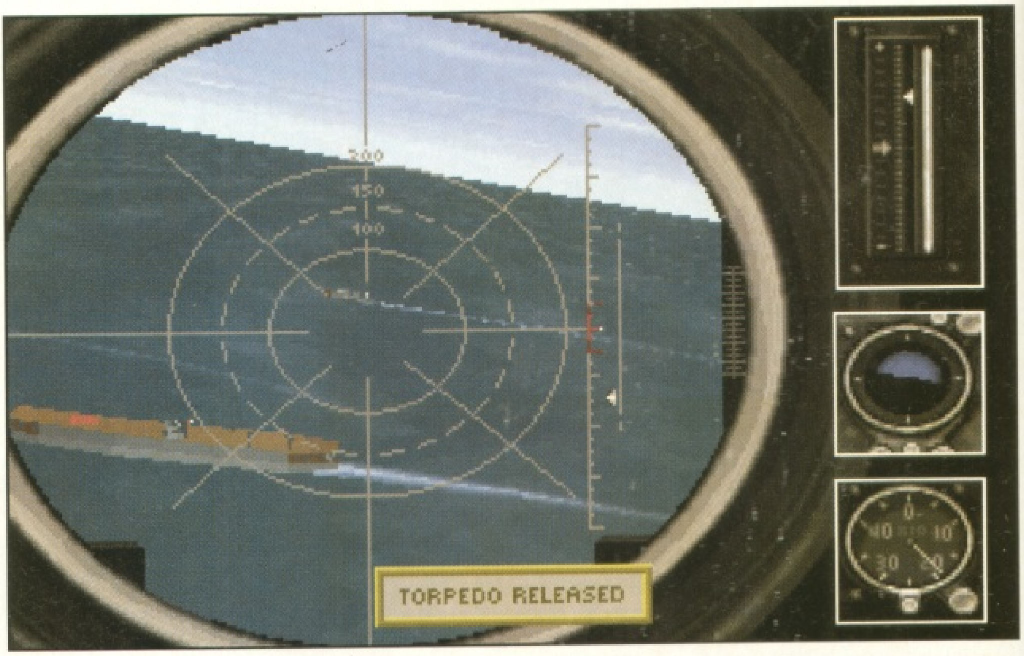
It was close but I've made it close enough to start my attack run. Here goes, stay on target, watch for enemy fighters...

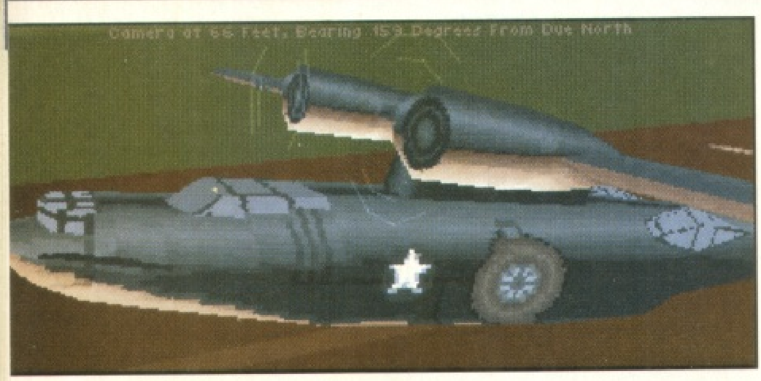
continued on next page ➡

(Right) The bombsight view is an invaluable aid if you want to be a successful bomber pilot. Apparently. Okay, so I haven't worked out how to use it properly yet and I tend to fly "Kamikaze" raids against enemy shipping, but give me a little time and I'm sure I'll work out what all the dials and gauges do.

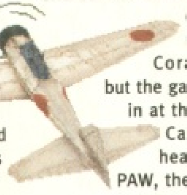
(Below) Probably the best time to take off is just before dawn. If you allow yourself an hour's flying time it will be daylight by the time you reach the target. Clever, eh?

(Bottom) Pacific Air War allows you to fly any one of 10 WW2 aircraft including P39's, Zeros, Hellcats, but sadly not flying boats.





get bored of flying single, stand-alone missions, the Career option gives you the opportunity to play them together in a campaign. Starting early in the war, you first pick your side and then choose to fly either as a Fighter, Bomber or Torpedo pilot for a year. Oh decisions, decisions... do you train to be a fighter pilot and frantically try to defend your bombers from mauraudíng Japanese Zeros? Or do you fly a bomber, a nifty looking aircraft that packs an explosive punch but has the agility of a Dalek on an escalator? Hmmm.



But the ultimate challenge must be the Carrier Battle option. Here you choose your scenario as usual (i.e. Coral Sea or Midway) but the game chucks you right in at the tactical deep end. Carrier Battles is the heavy, strategic part of PAW, the bit where you control the task groups, you plan the missions and you fly the planes. You're in command of just about everything.

Here's how it works. If you play the Americans and start the first battle (at Coral Sea) you control two individual groups of ships. You have two aircraft carriers, the Lexington and the Yorktown, under your command as well as a support group of assorted battleships and frigates. All you know is that somewhere out in the Pacific is a Japanese aircraft carrier, the Shoho, and 16 transports that are steaming west to invade the US base at Port Moresby.

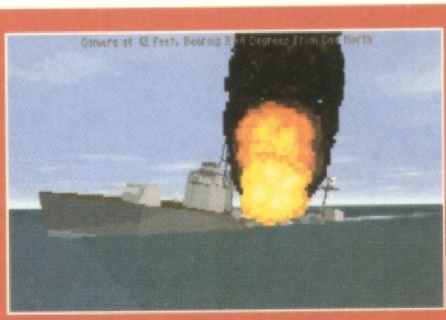
Of course, as you haven't got any radar, in order to find the enemy you've got to send out search planes to locate them visually. Once you've spotted them, you can then form airstrikes to try and knock them out and designate Combat Air Patrols to protect your own fleet. Winning is simply a case of juggling your resources and inflicting enough damage on the Japanese fleet so that they retreat and abort the invasion. Sink the Shoho and the air threat to your fleet all but disappears. You can then sink the transports at your leisure.

A neat feature in the Carrier Battles option is the ability to swap between planes with a simple tap of the 'F8' key. For example, say you have a flight of nine Dauntless torpedo bombers and four Wildcats which are on their way to attack a Japanese task group. You're flying the lead bomber when suddenly you're suprised by four Zeros which screech out of the sun to attack.

Apart from offering you, in effect, a number of "lives" if you're unfortunate enough to get shot down, a few quick taps of the F8 key allows you to jump from plane to plane until you're flying one of the Wildcats and gives you a much better chance of shooting down the enemy. When you're satisfied that you are out of danger, you can then jump back into a bomber and attempt to complete your mission.

In fact, the depth of the Carrier Battles option is really makes PAW the

As the carrier has already been hit, I decide to try and sink the destroyer escort. With a 'whee-splash' I let the torpedo go and quickly switch to the free-floating camera to watch it.



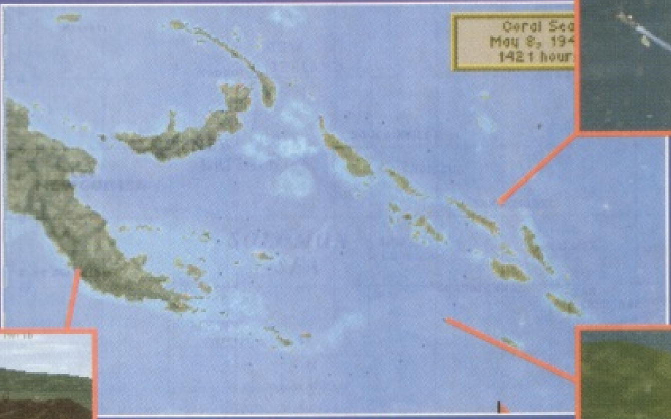
A hit! Kaboom! Scratch one Japanese destroyer. One of the nice things about PAW is the way that the ships slowly sink beneath the waves rather than just explode and vanish.

It may be cinematic but staying around too long in the war zone can be hazardous to your health. Hit by the barrage of AA fire, it's time to run away and limp back to the carrier.

Carrier Battles...

(Right) The first scenario in the Carrier Battles option is in The Coral Sea. Here a Japanese invasion fleet, consisting of 16 transports, battleship support and a task group led by the aircraft carrier Shoho are on their way to destroy and take the American base at Port Moresby.

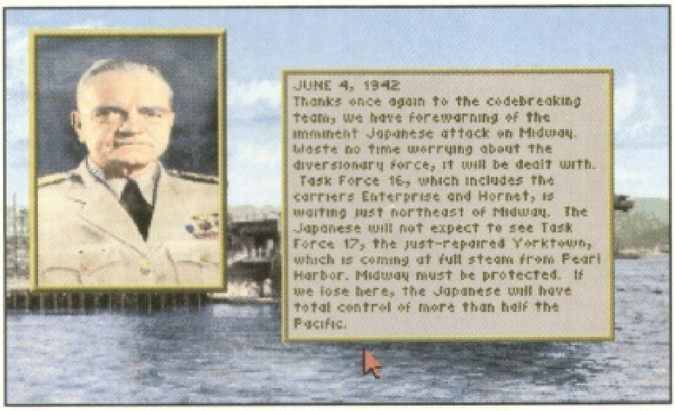
(Below) Playing the Americans you have two aircraft carriers (the Yorktown and the Lexington) under your control plus a B-17 bomber group and 50 P39s based at Port Moresby itself. You must stop the Japanese at all costs, sinking the Shoho if you can.



When a search plane has spotted the enemy it appears on the map together with the time and date of the sighting. You've got to act on the information quickly though — if you spend too long planning, the enemy ships might change course or, if you've spotted a carrier, send out an air strike of their own.

(Right) Of course, your fleet doesn't have the benefit of radar so the only way to locate the enemy is visually. Unfortunately this means you have to send out some of your precious bombers as search planes. The key to a successful campaign is to isolate the enemy, hit them accurately and repeatedly, and hope that you don't run out of planes.

(Below) Pacific Air War allows you to take part in any of the major Pacific battles. Probably the most famous of these is the Battle for Midway Island. Hey, wasn't John Wayne in the movie?



JUNE 4, 1942
Thanks once again to the codebreaking team, we have forewarning of the imminent Japanese attack on Midway. Waste no time worrying about the diversionary force, it will be dealt with. Task Force 16, which includes the carriers Enterprise and Hornet, is waiting just northeast of Midway. The Japanese will not expect to see Task Force 17, the just-repaired Yorktown, which is coming at full steam from Pearl Harbor. Midway must be protected. If we lose here, the Japanese will have total control of more than half the Pacific.

IT'S A BIT LIKE...

Origin's Pacific Strike is an obvious choice for a comparison because, bar those famous Origin talky bits, both games contain pretty much the same features. Pacific Strike follows the career of a young pilot during the 1942 Pacific war and also allows you to fly single missions and to design your own. Unfortunately, you'll need a monster, atomic-powered PC to get the best out of it, so unless you've got a DX2 I wouldn't touch it with a barge pole.

MAD MAN FAF'S WILDCAT

PACIFIC STRIKE CAN'T MATCH...

...1942: PACIFIC AIR WAR

good game that it is. The mix of Task Force 1942-style planning and flight sim is new, inventive and should be wildly and loudly applauded. It is mainly this, the excellent Gouraud-shaded graphics, the powerful mission builder and the superb attention-to-detail (bullets splashing in the water, wings shattering and falling off crippled Zeros) that have thoroughly impressed me and serve to bump up the overall mark to the glittering heights of PC GAMES STARdom.

As for criticisms, I think it's a shame that the frigates and battleships seem absolutely useless because you can't send them in to destroy undefended transports once the enemy carriers have been sunk. And I would like to have seen a deck gun; one last, desperate line of defence if your fleet's CAP gets shot down. But these are minor things and as long as MicroProse don't abandon the PAW game engine, but enhance it, refine it and re-use it in a sequel, I'll be even happier.

To sum up, 1942: Pacific Air War is by far the most playable and comprehensive flight sim I've seen since TFX. It flies beautifully, the Carrier Battles option will keep even the ardent strategist happy and there's enough crammed in here to keep you playing for months.

For those of you fortunate enough to have a modem or two PC's and a 20ft serial cable, MicroProse also promise that an add-on disk for multi-player play will appear within the month. So, believe me when I tell you that there isn't a better World War Two flight sim out on the market than this one.

Pacific Strike. Seen it, played it, loathed it, dumped it. 1942: Pacific Air War. Seen it, liked it, loved it, playing it again tomorrow.

1942:PACIFIC AIR WAR

MICROPROSE/IN-HOUSE

(0454) 326532

£44.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

40MHz 386, VGA, 640K, 2Mb RAM and 15Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Mouse; joystick; Ad Lib, Sound Blaster, Pro Audio Spectrum and Roland soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Superb graphics, a wealth of external views and great attention to detail.
- The Carrier Battles option — a mix of Task Force 1942 and Aces Of The Pacific — is inspired.
- MicroProse have returned to form — PAW is easy-to-use and very polished.

...AND THE BAD

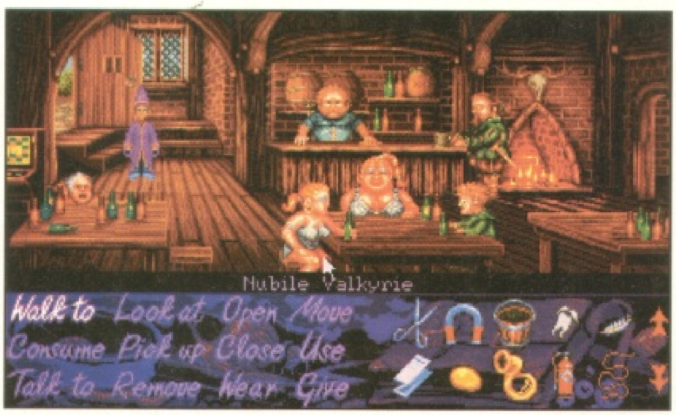
- No matter what I say, if you don't like flight sims you won't like PAW.
- I really would have liked a deck gun — no really, I would.

OVERALL

93%

cd updates

Phew! It seems that no sooner has a game appeared on floppy, than it's spruced up, given a smart new soundtrack and a ray-traced intro sequence and re-released on CD! Christina Erskine and Cal Jones take a look at the most recent culprits...



Simon the Sorcerer CD

Simon the Sorcerer was deliberately conceived as a comic adventure in the Monkey Island mould. The idea was that with a more British style of humour, the adventure would appeal to even more people on this side of the Atlantic.

It turned out to be not a bad stab at all: I always suspected Simon himself of being a bit of an anorak-wearer, but the story was always engaging and the puzzles were pitched at just about the right level. And it was funny enough for a sly grin, if not a bundle of belly laughs.

This CD version boasts a full cast of actors, including the ubiquitous Chris Barrie as Simon, coming together to produce a full talkie version. There is no doubt that the speech makes one hell of a difference: you actually find yourself watching and listening to some of the non-interactive bits because they're interesting, rather than skimming over the text and missing all the jokes.

Tower of Doom
Walk to Look at Open Move
Consume Pick up Close Use
Talk to Remove Wear Give

Some characters come across better than others, of course. The swampling (played by Jon Haines) is utterly delightful — the game is almost worth buying just it to hear him extol the virtues of swampling stew. Oddly enough, Chris Barrie's Simon is even more nerdish than I'd imagined from the text version — now I *know* he spends Saturday afternoons on platform 14 of Reading Station.

If you haven't encountered this adventure before, or you have and you reckon there's some playing left in it, this CD version is well worth the money.

ADVENTURESOFT/IN-HOUSE

(021) 352 0847

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

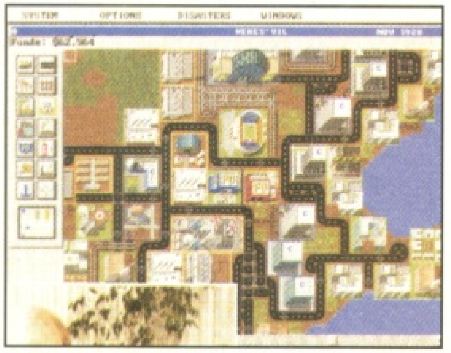
25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive, soundcard and mouse.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Pro Audio Spectrum and UltraSound soundcards.

OVERALL

80%



SimCity CD

The timing of this CD version of the *original* SimCity is doubly unfortunate. Not only is the disk version of SimCity 2000 still riding high in the charts, but the original has just been re-released on the Hit Squad budget label for ú16.99. So, for nearly three times the price, you get a CD instead of a floppy disk, and some video footage and speech. This does not immediately strike me as a bargain.

You get your speech (a) whenever you click on an item — a voice announces "Road" when you select the road-building option, and sometimes adds a little bit of 'advice', such as "Make sure your cities are well-connected", and (b) to accompany the video clips.

The video clips are 'opinion' pieces. Actors have been deployed to take the part of head of transport, electricity board president and so on. You can use the clips to check on how you're getting on, or they'll pop up unasked if something dramatic (and usually disastrous) is happening.

JOHN P. FERGUSON
CHIEF OF POLICE

On the plus side, the multimedia effects are very well produced. The video sequences are some of the clearest I've seen in any CD product and the speech is crisp and clear. Unfortunately, in my time playing SimCity CD I've seen far too much video and heard far too much speech.

My cities have produced some of the most miserable, whinging Sims I've ever come across. "The citizens demand a stadium. Just think how great a stadium would be" (Good God, stadiums cost $3,000 each and there's only $2,000 in the bank — shut *up*!). "Man, do you realise how much harm you're doing to the infra-structure of this city. We need funding, man" (Well, get off the screen, then, and let me do some road-building.)

Now I'm no SimCity novice. In SimCity 2000, my Sims are positively grateful to have me as mayor. I can do without all this nagging and, anyway, I'd rather see my theatres and hospitals and stadiums in lovely isometric 3D and have all the extra options as well. And SimCity 2000 is cheaper, CD or no CD.

INTERPLAY/MAXIS

(0865) 390029

£49.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

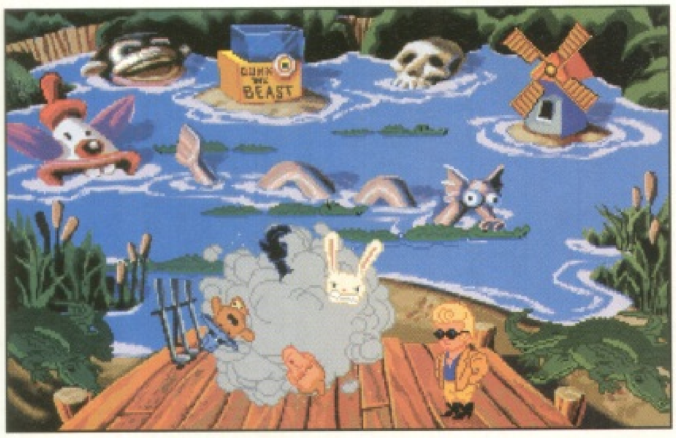
25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive and soundcard.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Mouse; Sound Blaster and Pro Audio Spectrum soundcards.

OVERALL

55%



US GOLD/LUCASARTS

(021) 606 1800

£45.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards.

OVERALL 93%

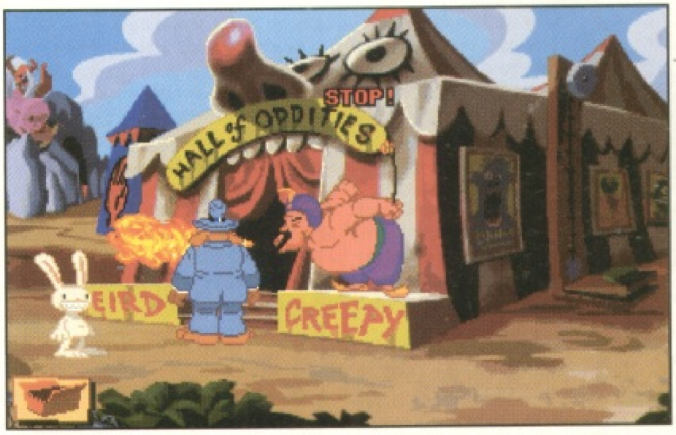
Sam & Max Hit The Road CD

One common criticism of computer games is that they're not funny — and that when they try to be humorous, they miss completely and just end up being corny or groansome. However, I defy anybody not to find Sam & Max funny, especially in this 'talkie' version. The humour is so much more effective when spoken, than when you have to read screeds of on-screen text.

Even the non-interactive bits become fun to listen to, and Sam the dog and Max the rabbit acquire real personalities when they're given a voice, as they go on an utterly surreal voyage of detection and discovery in some of the USA's more eccentric locations.

Normally, I'd say that adventures are rarely worth revisiting once you've solved them; Sam & Max is an exception. Even if you are an expert at Wak-a-Rat, know how to get across the alligator pool, and can whizz through Car Bomb, this CD version is definitely worth investigating.

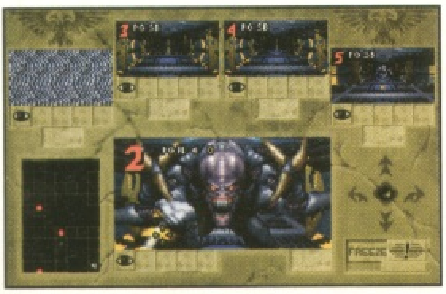
(Below) Sam & Max was good on disk but it's superb with the addition of digitised speech.



Space Hulk CD

Space Hulk is one of those games that hides its light under a bushel. Instead of flashy graphics, or beautifully rendered screens, we have good old fashioned-gameplay. For that reason alone, it may take a while to appreciate the gripping alien-fest that is to come. Not that the graphics are poor by any means; it's just that they don't advertise the game the way that some do.

Briefly, the plot runs like this: you have to get your marines into an alien spaceship that is overrun by genestealers, a particularly nasty alien lifeform that moves fast and specialises in ambush. You control your forces both from top-down and first person viewpoint screens — I suspect that any resemblance to the Alien series of films is, er, purely coincidental.



This CD-ROM version has been improved visually, it has speech (of course) and better sound, but what makes this game a desirable item over and above most CD conversions of disk-based games is that there are 10 new missions to play.

ELECTRONIC ARTS/IN-HOUSE

(0753) 549442

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM and CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Mouse; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

OVERALL 70%

and the rest

Lands Of Lore CD

Virgin/Westwood Studios

On disk, Lands Of Lore was a perfectly good role-playing adventure, neither deficient nor outstanding. For the CD-ROM version Patrick Stewart, the actor who plays Jean-Luc Thingy in Star Trek:TNG, has been drafted in to provide the voice for King Richard. And he does it jolly well too. It lifts the game on to another level of believability and gives it a real mediaeval atmosphere. Apart from that, well, it's Lands Of Lore, and I can see no reason whatsoever why anyone familiar with the original would need this as well.

UFO CD

MicroProse/In-house

UFO is a mix of strategy and combat, set around the scenario that advanced aliens have invaded earth. It's a perfectly good game, that unless I've missed something major has been enhanced not one jot in the transfer to CD-ROM — apart from the removal of the odd bug. No speech, no extra animations... I think this is what people mean by 'shovelware'.

Syndicate CD

EA/Bullfrog

Syndicate is a wonderful game — deep, absorbing and frequently brutal. Like UFO, Syndicate has been transferred to, rather than enhanced for CD-ROM, although this new version does include the add-on disk American Revolt, which has 21 new missions, and a network option for two to eight players. If you haven't yet played the game, it's well worth buying this CD-ROM to get the most complete version of it.

Companions Of Xanth CD

Accolade/Legend

Xanth, based on Piers Anthony's novels, is centred around the novel concept of a game within a game: your job in Companions Of Xanth is to play the game Companions Of Xanth. It's also notable for nodding towards the days of text adventures, with your possible actions at any point listed down the side of the screen rather than being represented by icon. This CD version contains some not-very-well-acted speech which complements (but not replaces) the on-screen text

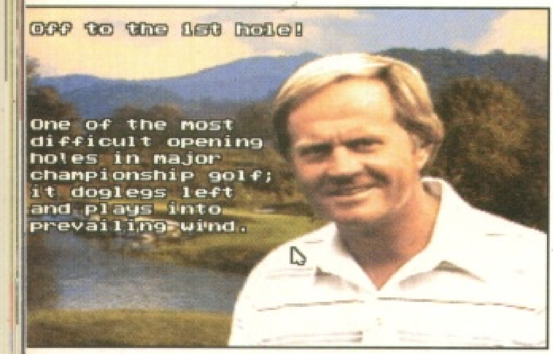
Hand Of Fate CD

Virgin/Westwood Studios

If for nothing else, the Kyrandia adventures will be remembered for the sheer prettiness of the graphics and the quirky charm of the gameplay and puzzles. This CD version of the sequel to Legend Of Kyrandia features digitised speech throughout rather than on-screen text, which is fine and, as tends to be the case, helps your suspension of disbelief considerably. However, Like any CD update, if you've played HOF already, why bother with this version?

Budget Reviews

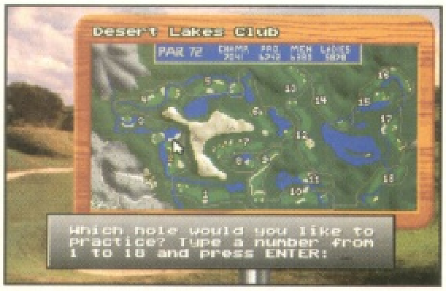
Can't afford the £30-plus asking price for today's hot new games? Then why not go into deep hibernation for a year or so — chances are, by the time you awake you'll find them all here, at a bargain pocket-money price.



Off to the 1st hole!

One of the most difficult opening holes in major championship golf; it doglegs left and plays into prevailing wind.

Jack Nicklaus Signature Edition Golf CD

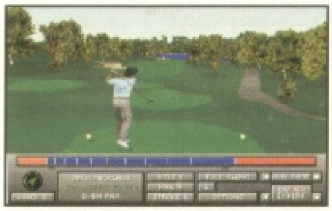


Desert Lakes Club

Which hole would you like to practice? Type a number from 1 to 18 and press ENTER:

Jack Nicklaus Golf is easily one of the best golf games on PC. Like nearly every other computer golf game, the skill lies in timing your shot. Once you've selected your club and corrected your aim, pressing the mouse button sends a power gauge rocketing up. Hitting the button a second time stops it and determines how much strength you put into the shot. A further third press corrects your swing so you don't hook or slice the ball.

On top of that you have to take the weather into consideration, to prevent wind fouling your shot. While this all sounds very elementary, it's not until you play the game that you realise how addictive it is. It's packed with options, most of which will only make sense to people who've played for real.



Also included on the CD is the original courses data disk, which gives a total of 16 courses to play on. On top of that you can design your own holes and, as a bonus, there's a file of clip art pictures, which is a bit pointless but someone obviously thought it was a good idea.

Jack Nicklaus Golf is pretty much the complete golfing pack on CD. It's got almost every feature you could ask for in a golf game, plus as it's on CD so it won't take up a chunk of your precious hard-drive space. Top hole.

ACCOLADE/IN-HOUSE

(081) 788 0200

£24.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

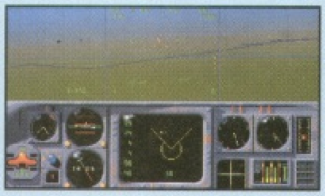
20MHz 286, VGA, 640K and CD-ROM drive.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Mouse; joystick; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Roland and Thunderboard soundcards.

OVERALL

90%



MiG-29 Super Fulcrum

THE HIT SQUAD/DOMARK

(061) 832 6633

OUT NOW £14.99

MINIMUM **SPEC**

20MHz 286, CGA, 640K and 5Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Joystick; Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards.

OVERALL

47%

My word, how time flies. Only the catatonic could fail to have noticed how far PC flight sims have progressed in the last couple of years. So it seems a shame when a title like this resurfaces at a time when we have the likes of TFX and 1942: Pacific Air War.

Forget Gouraud shading and texture mapping, the graphics in Mig-29 are crude polygons designed to be powered by anything from a 16MHz 386 upwards. And your plane is almost as basic as the graphics. Aside from a throttle, three weapons and an ejector seat, there isn't that much to play with. The missions are typically gung-ho 'Go out there and take on the world single-handed' scenarios which hardly vary.

Even at a budget price, you're much better off going the whole hog and picking up TFX or MS Flightsim 5.0. This game doesn't deliver the action or the playability that they do, even at its new budget price.

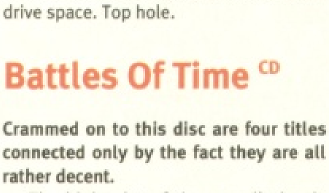
Battles Of Time CD

Crammed on to this disc are four titles connected only by the fact they are all rather decent.

The highpoint of the compilation is Mega-lo-mania where the aim is to conquer a series of worlds by helping your people to develop weapons and mine resources. It's simple, excellent fun, although once you get the hang of the gameplay it doesn't take long to master.

On the other hand you also get Perfect General and Battle Isle. Both of these are quality strategy/wargames, with the latter having a sci-fi slant. They're pretty heavy duty, which isn't a bad thing, and will keep you coming back for months.

The final game in the pack is First Samurai, which is a complete departure from its three buddies on the disc. It's a frantic hack-'n'-slay platform game, but here it's *sooo* out of place. Anyone who's into wargames will appreciate Battle Isle and The Perfect General, but will they be as keen on First Samurai?



All the games here are good, but unless you're just as happy to use your trigger finger as you are your brain, you might find yourself paying for just one or two out of the four games here.

UBISOFT/VARIOUS

(081) 343 1955

£29.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

25MHz 386, VGA, 640K, CD-ROM drive and mouse.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Joystick; Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards.

OVERALL

81%

Lemmings CD

Anyone who isn't sick of the sight of those green-haired Lemmings by now must have the patience of a mountain, because this game has driven just about everyone who's owned a computer in the last three years totally and utterly mental. There's now a triple dose on this CD, which bears both the original Lemmings, its sequel Lemmings 2: The Tribes, and the Oh No! More Lemmings add-on data disk.

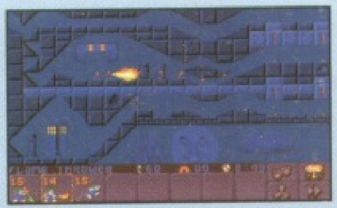
The aim of the game is to guide your tribe of suicidal Lemmings to safety by helping them overcome various hazards, such as bottomless pits or incinerators. To do this you can mutate individuals so that they acquire the ability to build bridges, dig tunnels, climb, use parachutes and so on.

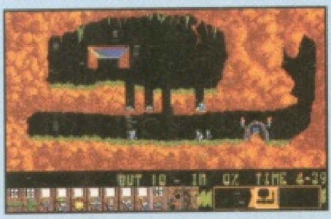
However, you're only given a certain number of mutations in each level — usually just enough to get you through. So it's up to you to figure out the best use of your available Lemmings and their skills as well as the best way through each level.

The puzzles in both games, especially on the later levels, can cause real cases of mental constipation. You can often stare at a level for ages without getting anywhere, then all of a sudden the answer will slip out and take you completely by surprise. And, as if the game wasn't tough enough already, every few levels a new hazard is introduced to keep you on your toes.

There's not a great deal of difference between the the first game, the data disk and its follow-up, except that the second game gives you even more varieties of Lemmings to play with and even tougher puzzles to conquer. What's common to all of them is the massive number of levels they offer — both pack enough of a challenge to keep you playing for months.

Personally, I hate Lemmings because they've plagued me throughout my career like the computerised equivalent of irritable bowl syndrome. I have to concede, however, that they are still the most innovative computer puzzlers of all time, and this pack is perfect for anyone who's yet to sample them.





Psygnosis/DMA

(051) 709 5755

£24.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPEC

16MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards.

OVERALL

89%

Quest & Fun CD

What we've got on this CD are three games which don't rate highly individually, but when grouped together make for a decent value pack.

King's Quest V, for instance, is one of the better instalments in the classic Sierra series. While lacking polish when compared to more recent games such as Sam & Max and Simon the Sorcerer it's still a good, solid dose of adventuring.

Leisure Suit Larry 6 just goes to prove that political correctness hasn't quite reached the computer games' world yet. Larry, for those of you who don't know, is the worst kind of bachelor in the world — worst in the way that he's destined to stay one until the day he dies. It's funny, lewd but ultimately not as playable as it should have been owing to a noticeable lack of depth.

The final game in the compilation is Red Baron, a WWI biplane sim. Like many flight-sims which resurface on budget labels and compilation, it lacks a lot in the face of more recent games. But the advantage Red Baron has is its simplicity. There are no complicated gadgets to get used to or dozens of key presses to remember; it's just you, a rickety plane and a large machine gun. It's really a bit more of an action shoot-'em-up that a true flight sim, but it's very good fun all the same.

If there's one thing you can say about all these games it's that you won't complete them in a hurry. But with just three games, none of which is a shining example of their particular genre, this is a pack you can easily afford to pass over.

UbiSoft/Various

(081) 343 1955

£29.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive and joystick.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards.

OVERALL

67%

Summer Challenge & Winter Challenge CD

Last month we had Winter Challenge re-released on budget, now it resurfaces again with its more seasonal brother. Both attempt to give you a smattering of decent simulations of actual Olympic events to save you the bother of pulling on a tracksuit and getting fit for real.

Unlike some sports games which rely on your ability to waggle the joystick as fast as possible, both the Challenges tax your timing skills which means you don't end up with embarrassingly over-developed arm muscles.

Both games let you save out your best results for each event and watch action replays of your performance, although replays of failures normally look much better. Once you're fairly proficient at every event, the only real challenge left is trying to beat your previous scores, which can be saved to disk. Alternatively, you can play against a mate and thrash the pants off him.

While the games use the same engines to produce the events (which makes some of them look very similar) there's no doubting that this is a quality product, especially for anyone who likes the idea of getting fit but can't be bothered to get off their backsides.

ARCHERY
Train
Return
SELECT TRAINING EVENT
Main Menu

While sharing the same curved shape, the medieval bow has little in common with its modern cousin, which has fibreglass coatings, synthetic strings and graphite arrows.

Accolade/In-house

(081) 788 0200

£24.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPEC

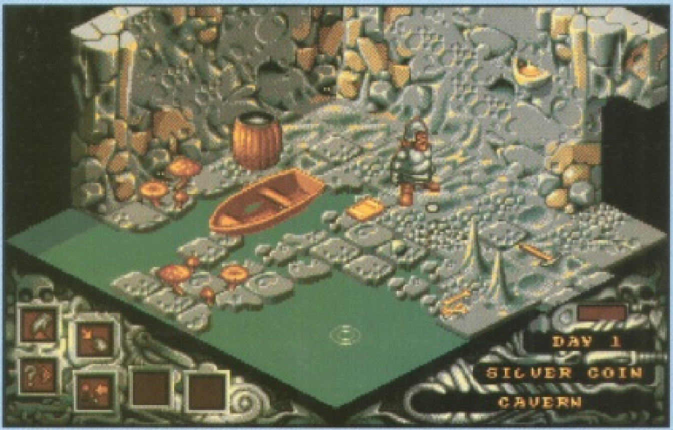
20MHz 286, VGA, 640K and CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; mouse; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Roland and Thunderboard soundcards.

OVERALL

89%



DAY 1
TUNNEL

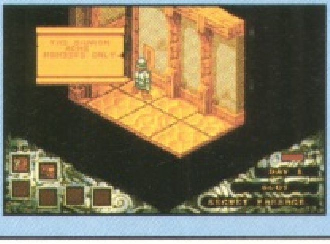
Cadaver & The PayOff

Now here's a game which didn't quite receive the success it deserved first time around, sinking into relative obscurity not long after its release.

It's programmed by the Bitmap Brothers, although when you take an objective look at their track record that doesn't really count for much. This, however, is one of their best creations.

Any former Spectrum owners will probably recognise this as being more than a little derivative of Ultimate's adventure classic Knight Lore, but that's no bad thing.

The onus is on exploration and puzzle solving in a sort of fantasy environment, although your joystick skills are often called upon to slice up the bizarre creatures you face. There are also plenty of hidden rooms to discover, which usually contain supplies of energy replenishing grub.



It does suffer from a few faults, though. It's all too easy to blunder into one of the many acid pools and lose most of your energy. And if you don't deal with some of the monsters quickly enough they have a nasty habit of trapping you against the wall and zapping most of your power in one go.

The graphics are excellent throughout. Unlike some other games which use the same perspective you don't encounter any problems with trying to line your character up with objects. It is difficult to negotiate your way through tight spaces, though, which makes for a few annoying moments. The controls are also slightly at fault; often you'll be trying to access your inventory and end up leaping forwards, all because somebody thought it would be clever to shove all the controls onto a one-button joystick.

Also in the pack is the expansion disk The PayOff, which contains another 200 rooms to explore. This is probably a bit too tough when compared to the original game, but it doesn't cost you any extra, so there's no complaints there.

This is a real bargain at the price, and with the expansion disk there's plenty of game to explore. Definitely the best cheapo game this month.

KIXX/BITMAP BROTHERS

(021) 625 3388

£16.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

16MHz 386, VGA and 640K.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Joystick; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

OVERALL

90%

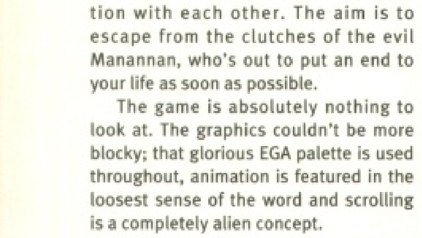
King's Quest 3

This is a real throwback when you compare it to more recent Sierra games, but like any blast from the past the nostalgia value is enormous.

In many ways it's much like its modern descendants, with the adventuring based solidly on bluffing your way past characters and using objects in conjunction with each other. The aim is to escape from the clutches of the evil Manannan, who's out to put an end to your life as soon as possible.

The game is absolutely nothing to look at. The graphics couldn't be more blocky; that glorious EGA palette is used throughout, animation is featured in the loosest sense of the word and scrolling is a completely alien concept.

And the graphics aren't the only thing that have dated — the gameplay isn't as challenging as I remember it. In fact it doesn't take much brainwork to get through the first quarter or so of the game. Were us gamesplayers more stupid back then, or something?



But for all these faults King's Quest 3 is still a good, solid adventure that's well structured and imaginative. If you're new to adventures this is as good a way as any to kick off, especially if you ignore the Legoland graphics. Survivors of more recent games may find it all a tad too easy, but it's still a pleasant enough way to while away a few hours.

KIXX/SIERRA

(021) 625 3388

£16.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

16MHz 386, CGA and 512K.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Joystick.

OVERALL

79%

Jimmy White's 'Whirlwind' Snooker

Programmed by Archer Mclean, the man behind classics such as International Karate and Dropzone, this is the best snooker game on any machine. It's main attraction is its speed and the zillions of different viewpoints. Everything you need to rack up a 147 break is included, from chalking the cue to determining where you want to hit the cue ball.

Technically this is still very impressive, especially as it can run at almost full whack even on slower machines. The way the viewpoint tracks the cue ball is excellent and the ball movement itself is perfect. If conventional snooker is too basic for you, there's also a trick-shot editor which lets you set up outrageous shots then miss them much to your embarassment.

The only drawback to the game is that it's not really that much like playing real snooker — it just doesn't feel quite right. Still, what do you expect using a mouse instead of a cue?

You don't have to be a snooker fan to enjoy this. It's playable, addictive and plenty of fun, especially in two-player mode.

THE HIT SQUAD/VIRGIN

(061) 832 6633

£14.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

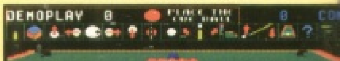
20MHz 286, EGA, 580K and mouse.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

OVERALL

88%



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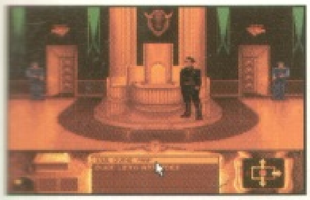


Dune

Despite being superseded by both a sequel and an enhanced CD version, Dune is a borderline classic — especially now it's out on budget.

If you've read the book, which is confusing, or seen the film, which is bizarre, you might have sussed out what this is all about. Basically, it's set in the far future where spice (a very rare thing indeed) is the most valuable and expensive substance in the galaxy — mainly because it powers all the space craft. Or, at least, the creatures that fly them. Or something. Anyway, you control one of three major trading houses, each out to control spice production on the desert world of Dune.

It translates into a sort of strategy game cum adventure romp, where you're trying to establish your position in the house while dealing with spice production and fighting off enemy attacks. It's a strange mix but one which works very well indeed.

One of the game's most noticeable features is its ultra-stylish graphics which are, well, different. It's not that they're bad — far from it — it's just that if you met anyone who looked like one of Dune's human characters, you'd probably run a mile.

This game has huge amounts of depth, almost faultless presentation and a decent amount of things to do. However, if you've played Dune 2 you'll probably feel somewhat restricted by the game's limitations. Still, for the asking price, it's a real corker.

The Hit Squad/Virgin

(061) 832 6633

£14.99 Out Now

MINIMUM **SPEC**

20MHz 286, VGA, 640K and 5Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Joystick; mouse; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

OVERALL

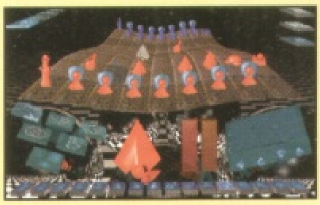
89%

Theatre Of War

Theatre Of War makes Spock's 3D chess look like snap. It resembles one of those dodgy 'stylish' chess sets you see in the Sunday supplements, except this doesn't cost you £32.50 a month for three years.

The gameplay's a cross between a wargame and traditional chess. The basic rules are similar to chess in the respect you've got to wipe out the enemy pieces and capture the board, but that's where it ends. Instead of taking it in the turns, the game's played in real-time, with your opponent making his decisions and moves at the same time as you.

The pieces in the game really bite back. Several can fire at the opposition, which means they can attack at long range, while others are just there to be pushed forward and, hopefully, survive long enough to get in close and do some real damage.



This is easily the most original of the budget releases this month, but it's certainly not going to be everybody's cuppa. Apart from a choice of graphic styles, the gameplay doesn't really vary very much — it's simply left up to you to create new tactics. Still, it comes recommended to those who like the odd cerebral challenge now and again. And, let's face it, who doesn't...?

The Hit Squad/360

(061) 832 6633

£14.99 Out Now

MINIMUM **SPEC**

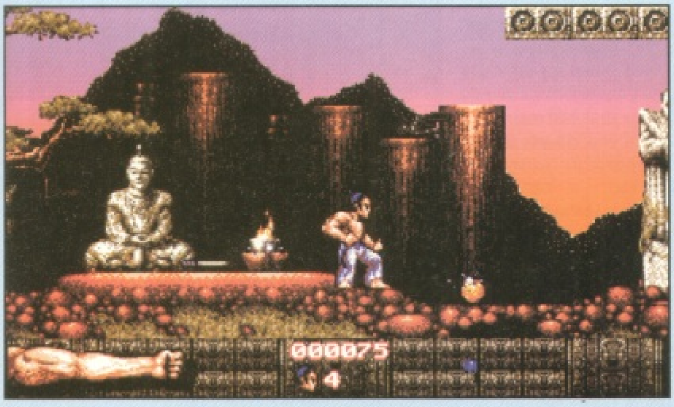
16MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RA, 5Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards.

OVERALL

76%

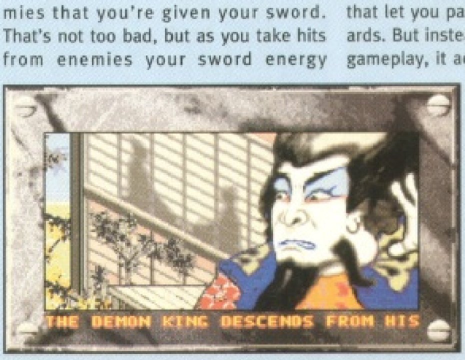


First Samurai

If there's one area where PCs always lose out to consoles it's in arcade style games. First Samurai goes some way to filling that gap, giving you plenty of opportunity to slice-'n'-dice demons with a very sharp sword.

It's a tale of revenge which kicks off in ancient Japan. You play a young samurai whose master is murdered by a former apprentice and, naturally, you want to do over the bloke who offed your mentor. That alone isn't a difficult task, it's actually the army of demons the murderer's employed to thwart you that make life a bit difficult.

Nothing is made easy for you. You start the game unarmed and it's only after you've killed a set number of enemies that you're given your sword. That's not too bad, but as you take hits from enemies your sword energy depletes and, if you're not careful, it's whisked away, leaving you with bare fists. This is often grossly unfair as you only seem to lose your sword when you really need it.



Thanks to a convenient time travel twist in the plot, the game's set across a 2,000 year period, ranging from ancient Japan to modern day New York. This provides a variety of different enemies and occasional twists in the action, such as battling your way through the carriages of a train which is driven by a zombie.

Programmers Vivid Image have also tried to include a puzzle element. It revolves entirely around you tracking down bells, which contain magic spells that let you pass particularly tough hazards. But instead of adding depth to the gameplay, it actually gets in the way of the action and is just plain annoying.

That's not to criticise the game too heavily, though. This is a good, solid and extremely difficult platformer which is a bargain for the price and a very welcome change from simulations and strategy games.

UbiSoft/VID

(081) 343 1955

£9.99 Out Now

MINIMUM **SPEC**

20MHz 286, VGA, 640K and 4Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Joystick; Ad Lib soundcard.

OVERALL

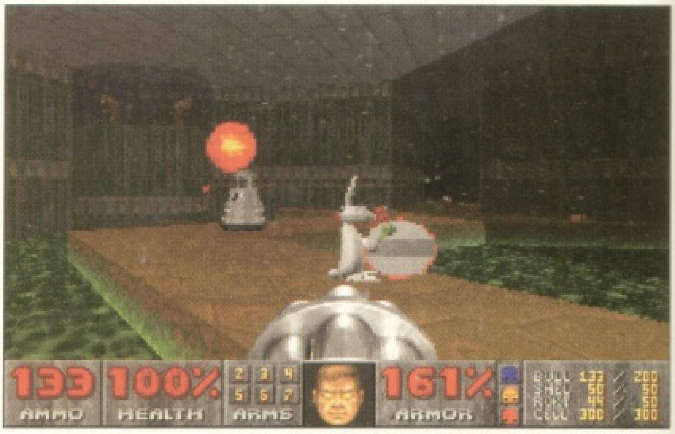
87%

Yours... *for less than a Fiver*

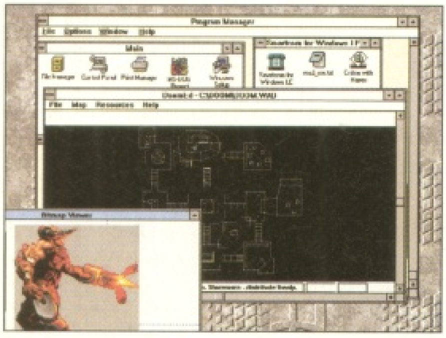
Not all of us can afford to blow £45 every two weeks on a new game, so Dean Evans takes another look at what the land of Shareware has to offer...

Shareware programs aren't just crappy EGA arcade games knocked up by some bloke in his garage (although I've seen some that look like they have been). If you look around hard enough there are some highly impressive games to be found lurking in Shareware libraries and on bulletin boards across the country.

Most, if not all of them, will cost you less than a fiver. So, for slightly less than the cost of a Terry Pratchett Discworld novel or seven cartons of Ribena (with 15% extra free), here's what's on offer this month...



Bored with Doom? Why not add new sounds from Aliens and change the baddies into Energizer Bunnies and Daleks?



Doom Corner

Okay, why am I rabbiting on about Id Software's frighteningly addictive carnage jamboree, Doom — *again*? Well, despite the fact that you've probably bought it, played it and finished it (even on Ultra Violence), the Doom bandwagon keeps rolling on regardless.

With the introduction of Doom level editors like DEU and DoomEd and audio editors like DMAUD, gamers have created a veritable cottage industry, frantically churning out new levels that incorporate new graphics, new sound effects and original background music.

So, if you've got access to a modem, you can log onto to a bulletin board like Compuserve or CIX and download any number of new, albeit unofficial, Doom levels. Some of these, like Command Control and Infestation, are excellent, while others illustrate the fact that Doom level design is at an early stage and is a complex and difficult undertaking. I know - I've tried.

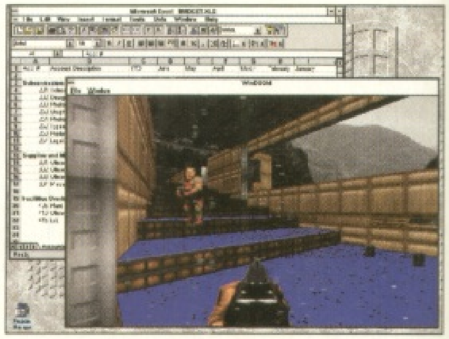
There are also programs that change the Troopers into Daleks, the Sargents into Energizer Bunnies and the Imps into Pacmen; patches that replace the sound effects with sampled sounds from Aliens, Beavis & Butthead, When Harry Met Sally and Monty Python.

In fact, it can all get really, really silly — imagine stalking through dimly-lit corridors hunting rabbits that have shotgun drums while you have nothing except a pistol that goes "Ni!" and a chainsaw that blows raspberries!

As for the future, I mentioned Doom 1.3 last time around and by the time you read this version 1.4 should be available, an updated version that corrects some multi-player anomalies (-1 frag if you kill yourself in Deathmatch, a weapon will disappear for 30 seconds after one player has picked it up, etc).

Also, a Windows version of Doom should soon be available by Christmas (supporting higher-screen resolutions) and there is a vague rumour that Id have a 32-bit version running under Microsoft's new and improved Windows 4.0.

As for Doom 2 (a mere 50 new levels, new monsters and new weapons), we'll have more news for you next time after the computer industry faithful have gathered in Chicago for this year's second Consumer Electronics Show.



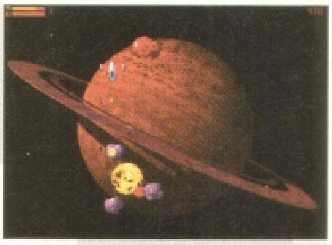
AstroFire

ORT Software

Hey, despite its 256-colour graphics and ray-traced spaceships, AstroFire is just a reworking of the old arcade classic Asteroids, isn't it? Well, okay, yes it is, but like the original game its great strength lies in its simplicity.

If you're not familiar with the old Asteroids game, let me exlain that AstroFire dumps you slap-bang in the middle of an asteroid field. Your job is simply to blow up the floating slabs of rock and survive.

It sounds simple, I know, but there are complications, such as the fact that your spaceship is subject to inertia and that every time you hit an asteroid, it splits into smaller chunks which move faster and are harder to hit. There are also enemy spaceships which often harry your progress. On the 'plus' side, there are energy power-ups to be collected along the way.



AstroFire is an addictive arcade game, and although it lacks the depth of gameplay to hold your attention for very long, you'll have fun while it lasts.

OVERALL 80%

Hocus Pocus

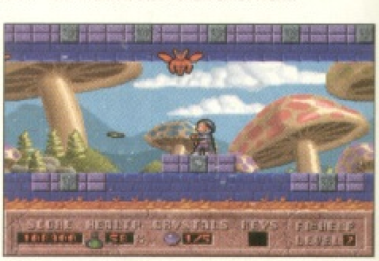
Apogee

Apogee has always been the acknowledged Shareware king, and with its past two releases, Halloween Harry and Raptor, this feeling has been reinforced. However, its latest platform romp, a game that goes by the name of Hocus Pocus, seems to me to be a bit of a backward step.

Using the same 256-colour graphics and game engine as Halloween Harry, your task is to guide a young apprentice wizard through a nasty-infested castle, zapping demons, jumping around platforms and collecting crystal orbs and assorted golden goblets.

It's all pretty standard and formulaic stuff, and although the graphics are quite nice, the central character is poorly animated and lacks the grace of movement that was a prominent feature of Halloween Harry — at times it's like controlling a brick.

While you might have fun with Hocus Pocus for a while, ultimately I found it annoying and frustrating. Apogee can do much better than this. Next!



OVERALL 65%

Epic Pinball

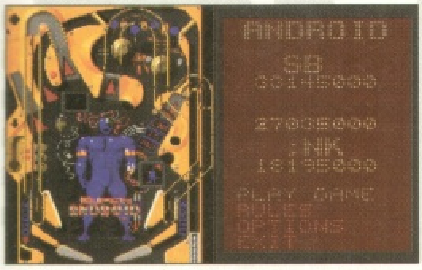
Epic Megagames

If you want to play pinball on your PC (it's still much better going down the pub/arcade and playing the Jurassic Park or Star Wars tables, if you ask me), you should really only go for either 21st Century's Pinball Fantasies or Epic Megagames' superb Epic Pinball.

This new collection of Epic tables is, er, exactly that, a new collection of tables. And you play pinball on them. That's about it really. Pinball is pinball. There's this steel ball and you flip it around the table lighting lights and doubling bonuses.

Despite the fact that the game is ludicrously simple, it's highly addictive and easily rivals anything commercially available at the moment. Oh and if you're looking for a real bargain, if you buy a Gravis Ultrasound Max card, you get the Epic Pinball game absolutely free. Absolutely amazing value!

Anyway, if you don't fancy shelling out £30 for Pinball Dreams or Pinball Fantasies, I can highly recommend Epic Pinball. It looks great, sounds better and plays beautifully. What more can I say?



OVERALL 89%

Where can I get this lovely **Shareware?**

If you'd like more information, or you'd like to try out any of products mentioned above, here is a list of some of the friendly Shareware libraries that you can call. Ask them to send you a catalogue of their games.

Transend Services Ltd
(0274) 622228
Testware UK Ltd
(0423) 886415
Benetech Systems
(0553) 611231
PD Soft (0702) 466933
PS Selections (0474) 325802

Shareware libraries often charge different prices for the same games so try to shop around to find the best deal. You'll usually find that you'll pay by the disk, not by the game.

This means that if one disk costs £2 then a game like Raptor (which comes on three disks) will set you back £6. Postage and Packing is normally included and if it isn't, go somewhere where it is.

If you've got a modem, why not try giving the following BBS systems a call. Initial on-line time is free but for more access most systems will charge you an annual subscription fee.

After Hours BBS
(0785) 228214

On-Line BBS
(0839) 661199/88/77

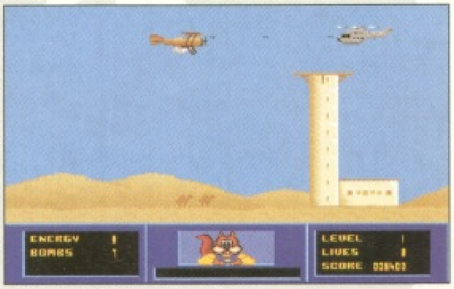
Desert Raid

Copysoft

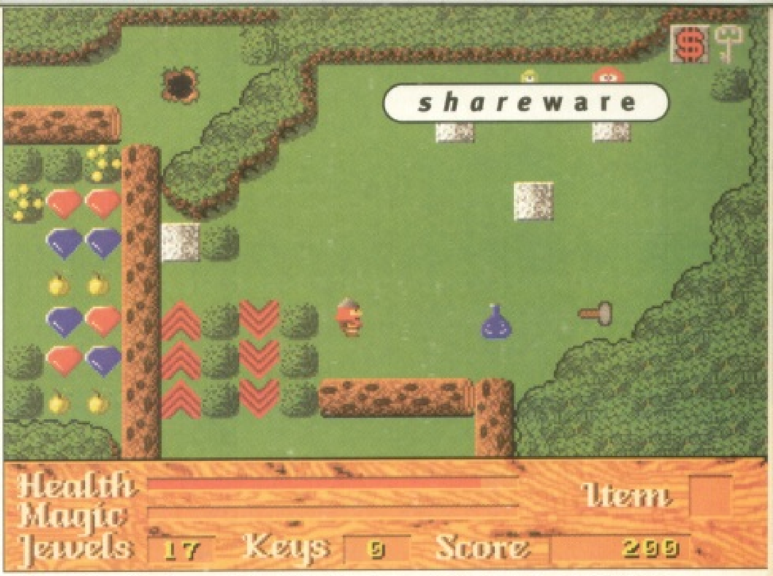
Remember what I was saying earlier about how some Shareware games look as though they were cobbled together by a bloke in his garage? Well, Desert Raid is one of them.

On a basic level it's a version of the old coin-op Scramble, but this time around you must fly your bi-plane (well, move it left, right, up and down a bit) into the very heart of an un-named Middle East country. You can shoot buildings and dodge missiles but there's not much more to it than this. It's basic, doesn't have any bells or whistles and seems to lack something intrinsic and fundamental...

And that's gameplay. Desert Raid hasn't got any and if you're still playing after five minutes it's through a perverse sense of curiosity. Avoid this, it's dire.



OVERALL 9%



Okay, so it doesn't look very pretty but God of Thunder is — believe it or not — quite playable.

God Of Thunder

Software Creations

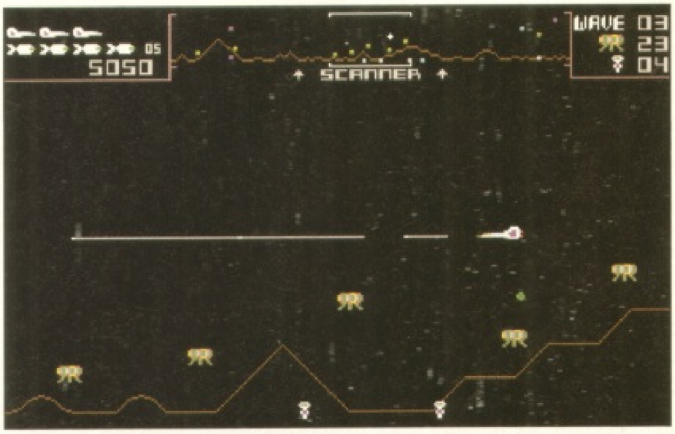
Have you ever seen Zelda: Link's Awakening on the Nintendo GameBoy? Well, Software Creation's new adventure, God of Thunder, is a bit like that. It's also a lot like Spiritual Warfare (rated 11% in the last issue), but without the generous helpings of fruit and the pop-up prayer books.

Using a very primitive top-down display you must guide the hero, Thor across the dangerous land of Midgard, fighting monsters, solving puzzles and collecting jewels. Your ultimate aim is to defeat your brother Loki, the God of Mischief, who has seized control of Midgard while your father, Odin, has his 100 year nap to revive his powers.

If you don't mind the blocky, EGA-style graphics there's a fair bit of adventure action in God Of Thunder. While it's not the best piece of Shareware you'll ever play, it's also far from being the worst.

Remember, great graphics and superb stereo sound do not a good game make. Okay, they help enormously, but God of Thunder does reasonably well without them. Bit of a shame, though.

OVERALL 75%



It may look primitive but this humble arcade game set the whole computer games ball rolling. This is Defender, those green things are the aliens and they're attacking your funny little men.

Defender

Sarwan Narine

So far this month we've had an Asteroids clone and a Scramble derivative (of sorts), now we round off with another coin-op classic, Defender.

The idea is to take control of a nimble little spaceship and fly around zapping the alien landers before they can descend to the planet's surface and carry off your people. You get a bonus for each geezer you save and, if you fail to stop an abduction, the landers transform into mutants hellbent on your destruction.

As I remember, it could all get rather frantic and with all the spaceships and features of the original included here, Defender should have been a superb nostalgia trip. However, it's painfully slow and this spoils what could have been a fast and furious arcade blast. Still, it's not bad, but it's so slow I didn't play it for more than five minutes. Hopefully the next version of the game will be a hell of a lot faster.

OVERALL 56%

HOT. T

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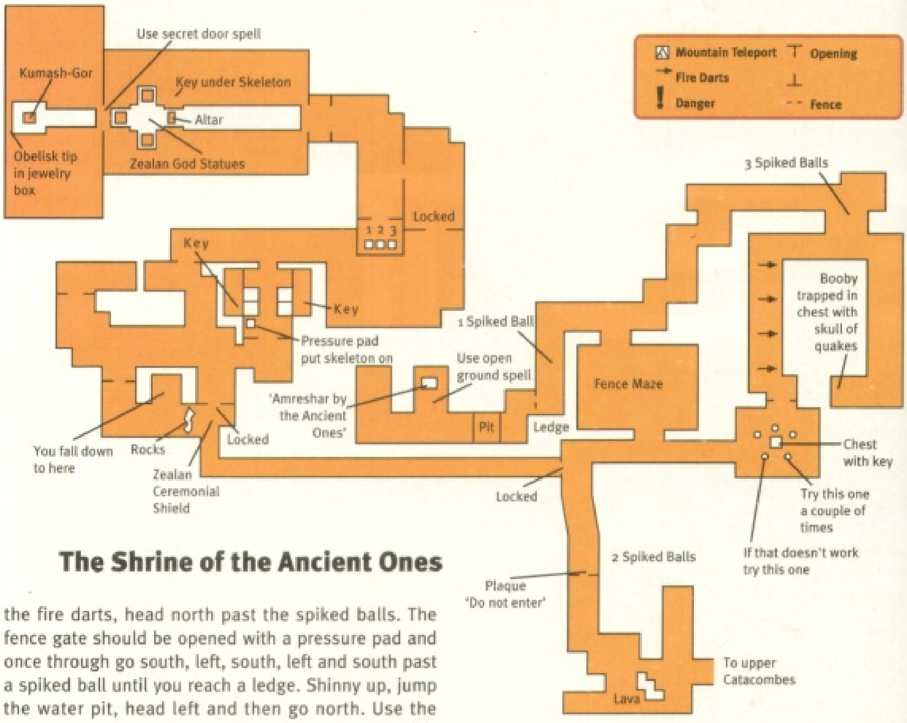
*The top journos from Mean Machines, Sega Magazine, Nintendo Magazine System, Computer and Video Games, PC Review, CU Amiga, The One Amiga and PC Games will all be there.

power up

Another rag-tag bag of top tips for you this month, including a comprehensive playing guide to the tougher parts of Origin's superb Pagan: Ultima VIII and COMPLETE solutions to Virgin's Beneath A Steel Sky and EA's Myst. And, as if that little lot wasn't enough, there's a choice selection of cracks and hacks in the Cheat Lab!

Pagan: Ultima VIII

Kill trolls and zombies; sit down to dinner with the Titans; lie back, relax and listen as we unravel the world of Pagan.



Use secret door spell
Kumash-Gor
Key under Skeleton
Altar
Obelisk tip in jewelry box
Zealan God Statues
Locked
1 2 3
Key
Key
Pressure pad put skeleton on
You fall down to here
Rocks
Locked
Zealan Ceremonial Shield
'Amreshar by the Ancient Ones'
Use open ground spell
Pit
Ledge
1 Spiked Ball
Fence Maze
3 Spiked Balls
Booby trapped in chest with skull of quakes
Chest with key
Try this one a couple of times
If that doesn't work try this one
Locked
2 Spiked Balls
Plaque 'Do not enter'
To upper Catacombes
Lava
Mountain Teleport
Fire Darts
Danger
Opening
Fence

The Shrine of the Ancient Ones

If you've been ploughing through Ultima VIII, chances are you've already wandered around Tenebrae, met Mythran, retrieved the ceremonial dagger and chatted to the Necromancers in the catacombs — that's the easy bit.

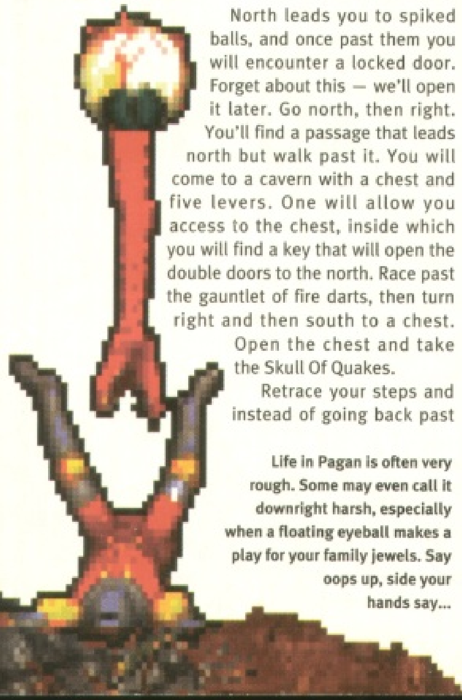
Over the next four pages we're going to show you how to finish the game, so if you don't want to know how it's done, look away now and turn over two pages. Okay, for those of you still left, let's start at the...

1 Shrine Of The Ancient Ones

Find a tomb with a plaque that reads 'Towards fate do you travel' and open the door with the Scion key. Go in, cross the lava and then go north, left and north again. You will come across another plaque with 'Do not enter' on it. Ignore it completely and enter the Shrine Of The Ancient Ones.

North leads you to spiked balls, and once past them you will encounter a locked door. Forget about this — we'll open it later. Go north, then right. You'll find a passage that leads north but walk past it. You will come to a cavern with a chest and five levers. One will allow you access to the chest, inside which you will find a key that will open the double doors to the north. Race past the gauntlet of fire darts, then turn right and then south to a chest. Open the chest and take the Skull Of Quakes.

Retrace your steps and instead of going back past the fire darts, head north past the spiked balls. The fence gate should be opened with a pressure pad and once through go south, left, south, left and south past a spiked ball until you reach a ledge. Shinny up, jump the water pit, head left and then go north. Use the reagents nearby to make an Open Ground spell which you must cast on the ground near the headstone. Drop down the hole.



Life in Pagan is often very rough. Some may even call it downright harsh, especially when a floating eyeball makes a play for your family jewels. Say oops up, side your hands say...

Go south, left and then north. Keep heading over to the right until you come to an area with small 'rolling spheres'. Put the skeleton on the raised pressure pad (it's a bit tricky this bit) and the fence gate will open. Jump over the light beam and head right to the puzzle.

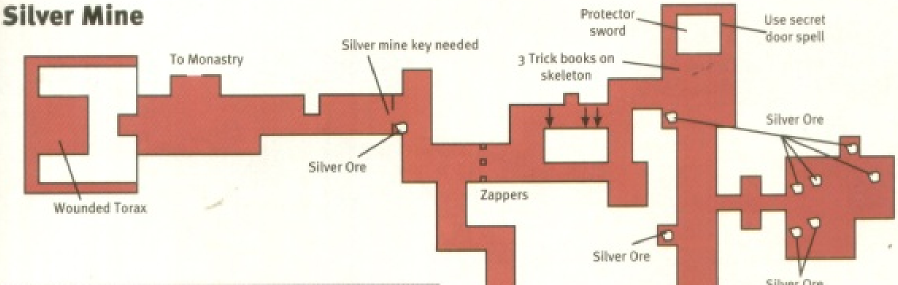
The puzzle is based on the old Tower Of Hanoi conundrum. In front of the stone steps are three pressure pads and when activated the steps either raise or lower. If you number them from left to right as 1, 2 and 3, the correct sequence is as follows:

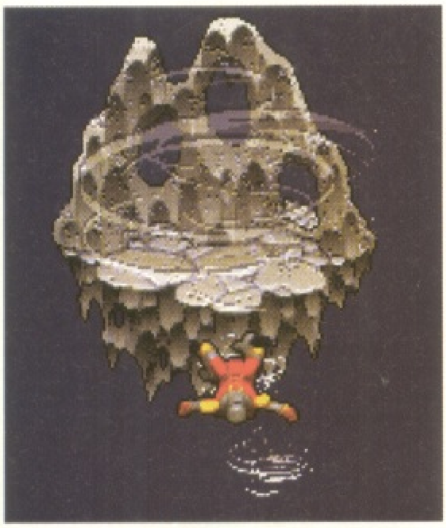
3 1 3... 2 1 2... 3 1 2... 3 2 1... 3 1 3... 2 1 2... 1 3 2... 3 1 2... 3 1 3... 2 1 2

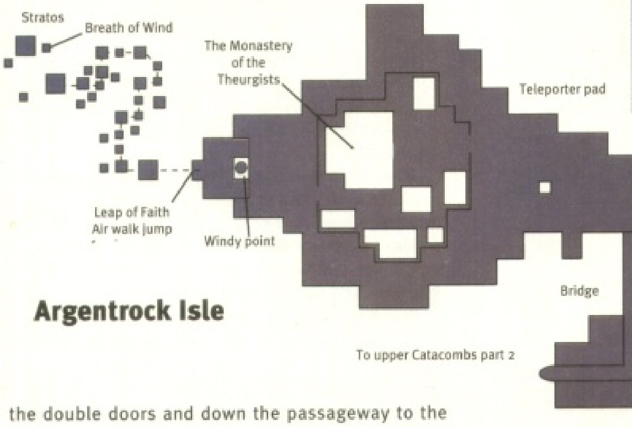
At the end of this sequence all the steps will be raised in the middle and a hidden doorway will be revealed. The door leads into a chamber with two light beams which can be passed either by casting Rock Flesh or by drinking a purple potion. Go down the stairs and head north to some big double doors. Use the Scion key to open the doors and the second set that lie behind them.

Inside you should find a skeleton on a bench under which is a key. Take the key and head back out through

Silver Mine


To Monastry
Silver mine key needed
Protector sword
Use secret door spell
3 Trick books on skeleton
Silver Ore
Silver Ore
Zappers
Wounded Torax
Silver Ore
Silver Ore




Stratos
Breath of Wind
The Monastery of the Theurgists
Teleporter pad
Leap of Faith Air walk jump
Windy point
Bridge
To upper Catacombs part 2

Argentrock Isle

the double doors and down the passageway to the right. Now unlock the doors at the bottom of the screen. Now go back and unlock the last set of locked doors, nip inside and grab the Zealan ceremonial shield. Return to the room with the skeleton and the altar in it and place the shield on the altar.

Listen to what the statues have to say. Use a secret door scroll to unlock the door behind the statues. Prepare a Grant Peace spell. Go into the room and cast the spell on the ghost. Take anything of interest but DO NOT FORGET the small obelisk tip near the wall. THIS IS MIGHTILY IMPORTANT. Go back to the statues again and listen to what they have to say.

Return to Stone Cove by teleporting to the Hall Of The Mountain King, then use the mountain sign teleport (sign of Lithos on the big rock). Leave the cavern by heading south.

If you haven't done so already, open the door with the spikes around it (with the Scion key) and stroll into the Pit Of Death. Go left, south, left and then down the ledge. At the ruined building use the Create Golem spell on the mud that is just visible in the top-right of the screen. Command the Golem to open the doors and then use an Open Ground spell on the earth next to the gravestone. Get the Heart Of The Earth and then return to Stone Cove. Walk north and re-enter the catacombs.

2 Argentrock Isle

Use our handy map to find the doors and unlock them with the Scion key. Make sure you walk over the teleport and walk north to the Theurgist's settlement. Talk to Stellos the monk about the tests to become a Theurgist. Xavier will administer the first test — the Test Of Wisdom.

The answers to the test are some of the following (the questions change each time you take the test — use the answers where applicable): 'Remain quiet'; 'Tend the injured'; 'My sight'; 'A weapon destroys, wit builds'; 'The battle is lost'; 'Honesty'; 'Welcome him home'; 'Truthful testimony'; 'An evening on a breezy porch'; 'Comfort a sad child'.

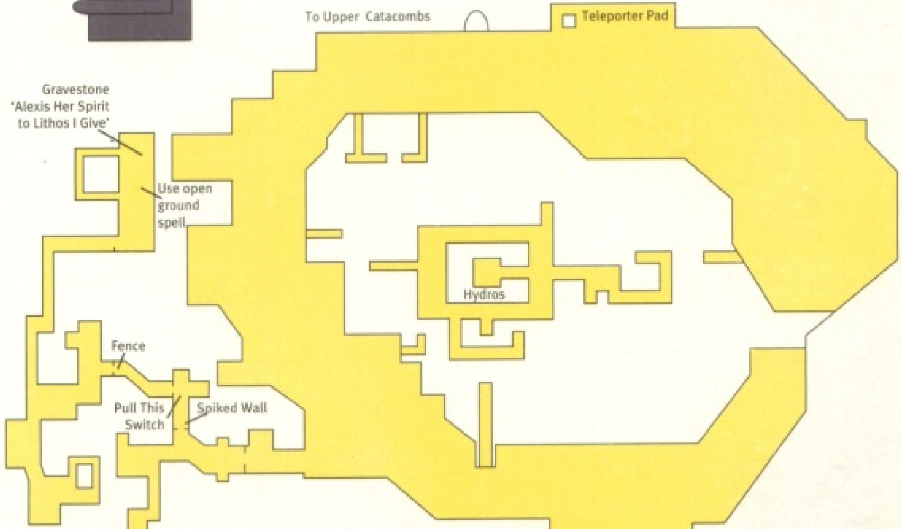
After you have passed the Test Of Wisdom you must then pass the Test Of Centredness. Go to Windy Point behind the monastery and climb the first ledge. SAVE THE GAME. Now climb onto the rock that has the sign of Stratos on it. Stratos will test you by trying to blow you off the rock. All you have to do is try to stay inside the circle.

Once you have passed the test go back to Stellos and he will give you the key to the silver mine underneath the monastery. Go down to the mine and collect eight lumps of silver ore. Now use the recall item to zap back to see the blacksmith in West Tenebrae. Ask him to make the eight foci for the theurgy spells and then teleport back to Argentrock.

Place each focus on the altar in the monastery where they will be 'charged' with magical power. Pop back to see Stellos and he will set you a third test. Go down to the silver mine underneath the monastery and heal the wounded Torax — either use Aerial Servant to move it closer or jump over the chasm and then teleport out.

When you get back Stellos will tell you that brother Xavier has had his healing foci stolen. Talk to everybody about everything and then use the Reveal Truth spell when you talk to Torwin. After all this is out of the way, Stellos will direct you to see Stratos.

Go back to Windy Point and SAVE THE GAME. Now take a leap off the edge and Stratos will whirl you about onto a rock. Jump across the stones and Stratos


To Upper Catacombs
Teleporter Pad
Gravestone 'Alexis Her Spirit to Lithos I Give'
Use open ground spell
Hydros
Fence
Pull This Switch
Spiked Wall

Carthax Lake

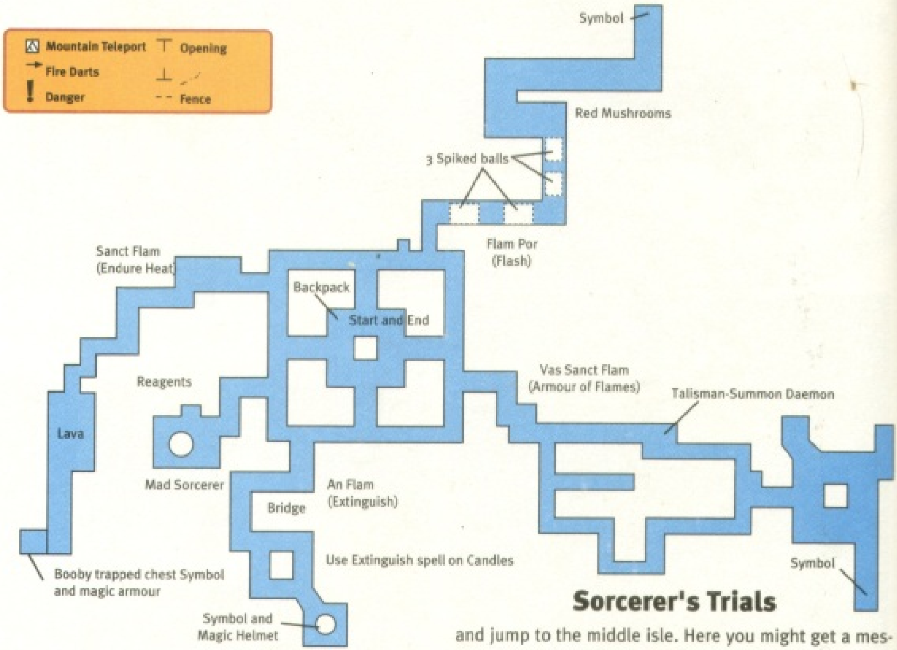
will give you the Air Walk focus that will make you a theurgist adept. You can also save some time for yourself here by casting Reveal while she in visible and then Aerial Servant to steal the Breath Of Wind.

3 Carthax Lake

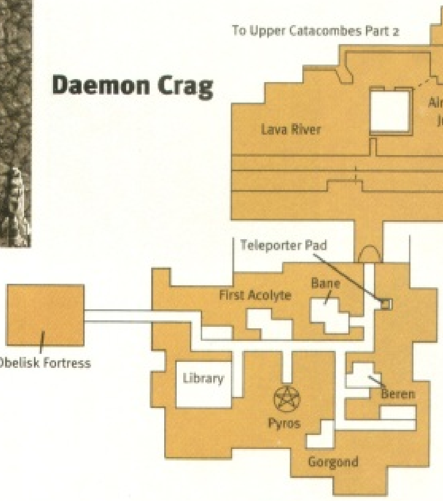
Return to the catacombs and go to the entrance to Carthax Lake. Again make sure you walk over the teleport pad to activate it. Chat with Hydros in the centre of the dried-out lake. She will try to get you to free her by offering you some power over water. Don't accept — she's lying — but you can free her later... maybe.

Make your way through the tunnels and, when you reach a brick wall with a gate in the centre, flick the left switch to open it. The gate after that should have a pressure plate in front of it and should go down when you approach it.

Once you reach the gravestone with 'Alexis her spirit to Hydros I give' engraved upon it, use the Open Ground spell to release Hydros. Sadly she reneges on her deal but you've now gained access to the mythical and oh-so-secret Sorcerer's Enclave.


Mountain Teleport
Opening
Fire Darts
Danger
Fence
Symbol
Red Mushrooms
3 Spiked balls
Flam Por
(Flash)
Sanct Flam
(Endure Heat)
Backpack
Start and End
Reagents
Vas Sanct Flam
(Armour of Flames)
Talisman-Summon Daemon
Lava
Mad Sorcerer
An Flam
(Extinguish)
Bridge
Use Extinguish spell on Candles
Symbol
Booby trapped chest Symbol
and magic armour
Symbol and
Magic Helmet

Sorcerer's Trials


To Upper Catacombes Part 2
Air Walk
Jump
Lava River
Teleporter Pad
Bane
First Acolyte
Obelisk Fortress
Library
Beren
Pyros
Gorgond

Daemon Crag

4 Sorcerer's Enclave

Go to the area in the catacombs with the double door (when you pull the lever, one goes down and the other up). Step on the door and use an Aerial Servant to pull the lever. Go south until the lava stops you, go left to the corner and jump to the middle isle. Here you might get a message from Beren the Mage. Go round the isle clockwise and cross over the water. Head right and take the passage at the bottom of the screen that leads south.

5 Daemon's Crag

Follow the path south and take the first right — you should come across the teleportation pad here. Go to the first house on the left and talk to Bane. Leave and engage the other acolytes in friendly, good-natured banter. Talk to Vardion. Betray either Bane or Vardion (it doesn't matter which, but Beren won't be pleased if you help to kill Bane) by revealing the others TrueName.

Now the first acolyte will give you a key for your services. Take the key and unlock the library. Take any items you need and read the books to learn the fire spells. Take the test for the first acolyte and after you pass it you will be able to enter the Obsidian Fortress for more trials (see Sorcerer's Trials map).

Inside, dodge or destroy the two daemons that greet you. Don't attack the next daemon (he's house

The bit just before...

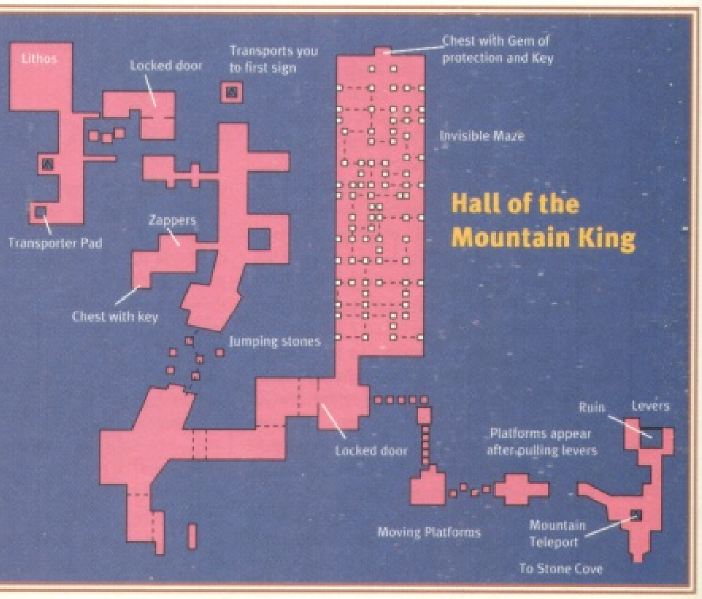
Now just in case you haven't made it as far as The Shrine Of The Ancient Ones, here are a few blatant tips to help you with the bit before it, The Hall Of The Mountain King.

Once you've entered the caves, leap over the gaps to a ruin. Next climb over the walls and pull the lever near the winches and the other lever near the door. Now head left past the sign of the Mountain King and cross both the evaporating and the moving platforms.

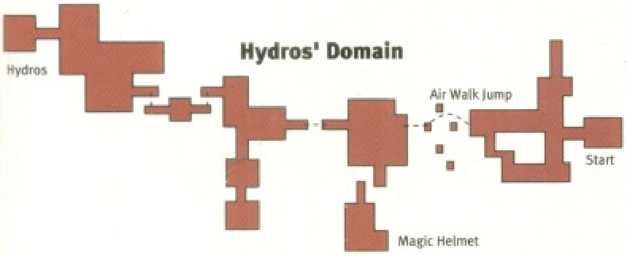
Once you've jumped all the platforms you'll come across a locked door. Leave this for now and walk right into the invisible maze. Either use the map to negotiate it or cast Rock Flesh or Withstand Death to just walk right through. At the other end of the maze you'll find a chest with a Gem of Protection and a key to the locked door.

Run back through the maze and open the door. Cross the sinking stones, head left past the deadly zappers and search the skeleton and the chest. Pick up the key that you find. With this key, nip back past the zappers and head north again. Jump across a gap and open the next locked door.

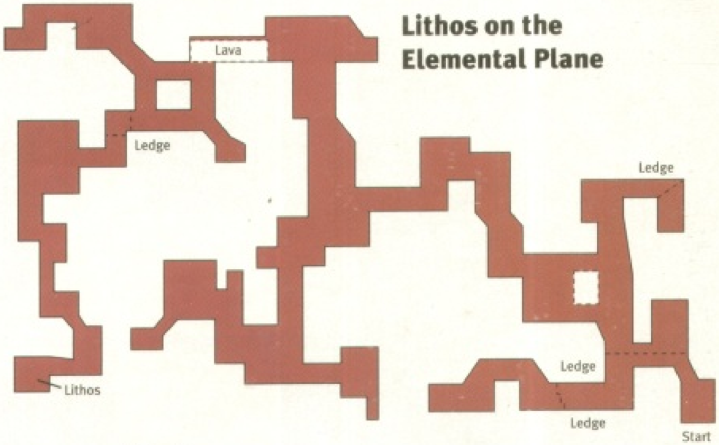
Once through this door you must leap over even more moving platforms before you reach solid ground. Head left to activate the transporter pad, then walk north (see nice map) to your audience with Lithos. Listen to what he says and then zap back to Tenebrae.


Lithos
Locked door
Transports you
to first sign
Chest with Gem of
protection and Key
Invisible Maze
Transporter Pad
Zappers
Chest with key
Jumping stones
Locked door
Ruin
Levers
Platforms appear
after pulling levers
Moving Platforms
Mountain
Teleport
To Stone Cove

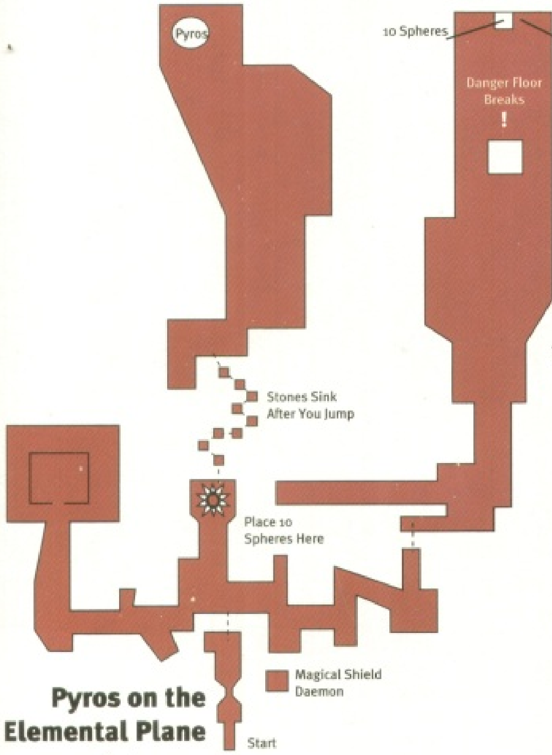
Hall of the Mountain King


Hydros
Air Walk Jump
Start
Magic Helmet

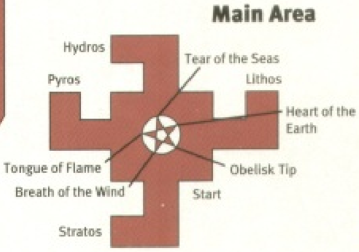
Hydros' Domain


Lava
Ledge
Ledge
Ledge
Ledge
Lithos
Start

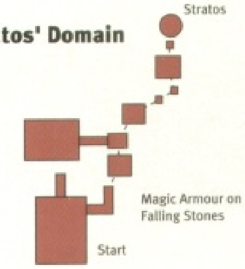
Lithos on the Elemental Plane


Pyros
10 Spheres
Flame Sting
Danger Floor Breaks
!
Stones Sink After You Jump
Place 10 Spheres Here
Magical Shield Daemon
Start

Pyros on the Elemental Plane


Hydros
Pyros
Tear of the Seas
Lithos
Heart of the Earth
Tongue of Flame
Breath of the Wind
Obelisk Tip
Start
Stratos

Main Area


Stratos
Magic Armour on Falling Stones
Start

Stratos' Domain

trained, apparently). He will give you some information about your next tasks. Each of these tasks will test your skills in the following magical spells — Endure Heat, Flash, Extinguish, Banish Daemon and Armour Of Flames — so it's obviously best to prepare them before you go in.

If you come across an unfriendly sorcerer you must kill him or you'll end up as fish bait. Solve each of the four puzzles and collect the four blue symbols. Return to the fire pillars that make up a pentagram and you should be transported to meet the master sorcerer.

6 And now, the end is near...

Do whatever the master sorcerer asks, prepare an Ignite spell and pick up a red candle. Shoot at the master sorcerer and then wait for his instructions. Once you pass his tests you will become an acolyte, and the master will take both himself and you to a mystical pentacle for the summoning ceremony.

The master sorcerer will ask you to place a candle and ignite it. Pyros will then appear and Malchir will begin to question him. After Pyros and Malchir have argued, head back to the fortress and find Malchir. Start a fight with him by teasing him about his frock being out of fashion, or that the horned one resembles his grandmother. Batter him to death and take the Tongue Of Flames from his body.

7 And so we face, the final...

Return to the plateau and drop in on your old pal Mythran. Question him about reconstructing the Temple Of Obelisk. Read the book about the destruction of the Temple (strange — that wasn't there before...) and then zap back to central Tenebrae to talk to Devon. Chat to him about the Tear Of Seas and he will give you a key to the locked chest near the armoury. Unlock it and get the fabled Tear Of Seas.

With all five pieces in your possession, zap back to Mythran and get the guide to Ether travel. Next buy the reagents needed to energise the book. Once you activate it you will be transported to the Elemental Plane. (WARNING: You cannot return to Pagan from here so take as much as you can with you.)

8 I've lived a life that's full...

You have to complete four tasks to reach each of the four titans. For Earth use Endure Heat to get past the lava; for Water just keep jumping; for Fire you'll need some white balls to drop on the glowing squares; and for Air ignore all the treasure and just KEEP jumping.

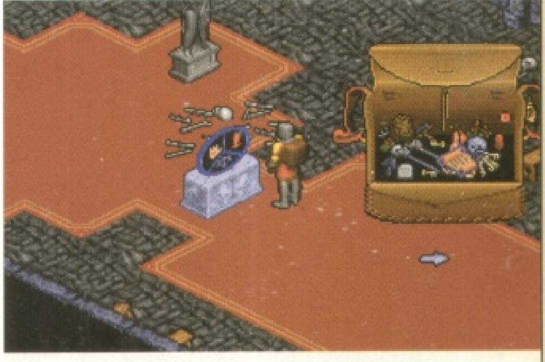
Reagents of Thaumaturgy

Once you reach the titans, double click on the corresponding obelisk items and then on the titan. For Lithos click on the Heart Of The Earth; for Hydros click on the Tear Of Seas; Pyros needs the Tongue Of Flames and for Stratos use the Breath Of Wind. All the items should glow after you energise them with the titans.

After you disable the last titan you will be teleported back to the Elemental plane where you must put the glowing items on the round dais in the pentagram. Place the obelisk tip on last and then double click on it. Finally double click on yourself. The objects will disappear and then a black obelisk should appear in the centre of the Pentagram. Walk into the Obelisk and... cue end sequence!

Congratulations and well done — we knew you could do it!

This Ultima VIII guide was brought to you by PC GAMES in collaboration with the very talented Mr C. Lee of Walthamstow, London, who wins a copy of something nice for his troubles.



Been sucked through the pages of a book and dumped on a strange island? Don't worry — just put on your lateral thinking cap and follow us into this detailed solution to Broderbund's puzzler.

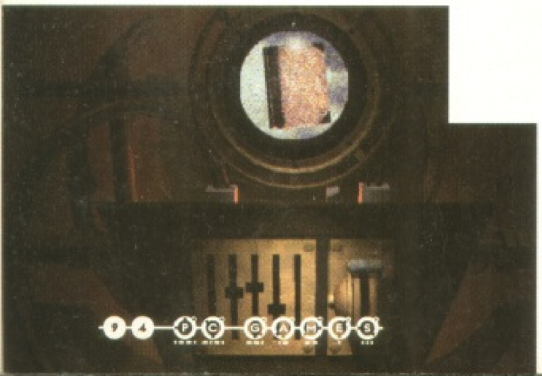
Myst

Let's not beat about the bush here. Myst is tough. Very. Splendidly thought out, for sure, but it can all get very frustrating. If you take it in stages, though, the following walkthrough should be your ultimate frustration-beater.

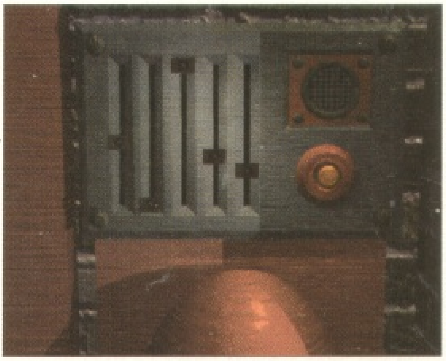
Myst Island

When you first arrive, it's best to look for clues as to what's going on. The note from Atrus on the path to the library directs you to the room under the dock. If you go there and enter '8' into the control panel (the number of marker switches on the island) then you'll get a recorded message. That's your intro to the game.

From the dock head for the library, as that's where you'll get most of your hints. The books in the bookcase contain invaluable information on each age you will have to visit, and clicking on the left painting opens the stairs to the tower. There you'll find more clues. To get the hint for a particular location, read the hints sheet in the Myst box. This is the only part that Broderbund help with.



The red and blue books in the library are what the whole adventure is about. By putting five pages in one or other book (you don't need to do both) then you'll free one or other brother who'll give you the access code to the vault, which is the last part of the game. But how do you get five pages? Well, we're just getting to that...



Travelling To The Different Ages

You get given one page as a freebie in the library, just for visiting, as it were. Reading the books with only one page, however, gives you a very scrambled message. As you collect more pages for your chosen book (and remember that you can only carry one at a time) the message becomes clearer and clearer until you release the whole story, in the words of whichever brother you've chosen.

The other pages are scattered around four ages that have to be accessed by solving puzzles on Myst. It can be a long journey to the exit that leads back to the island, so I advise you to save the game before heading to parts unknown.

Mechanical Age

Go to the clock tower across the island from the library, and use the wheels to set the time on the clock to 2:40 (the big wheel's minutes, the little one's hours). Then hit the button. This will raise the causeway to the tower.

Inside the tower pull the levers to set the numbers to 2,2,1. Pull the left lever to rotate the bottom two numbers one notch, and hold it down to continue rotating the middle number. The right-hand lever

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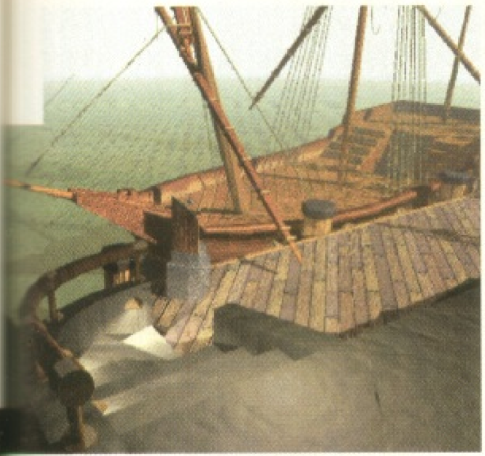


works similarly for the top two numbers. The last lever resets the puzzle.

Once you have the dials right, go back to the giant cogs by the dock. One will have opened up, and inside is a book that takes you to the Mechanical Age. Open it to get whisked away, but remember to save first...

There are three islands in this age: one each at the north, east and south of a rotating fortress. You start at the south. Go into the fortress and explore the two brothers' rooms. Each has a hidden chamber, and they contain a red or blue page.

Achenar's room also has a Fortress Rotation Simulator. Get some practice with this, since you won't be able to see what's going on with the real thing and will only have sound to guide you. Each direction has its own particular noise, so you'll be able to tell which way you're turning to.

The actual rotation device can be found up a lift that's between the two rooms. Press the red switch to open up the staircase to the elevator controls. If you go downstairs you'll find another lever (there are lots of buttons and levers all over the place in Myst). Use it to line up the openings on the circles diagram. The picture will turn red and you can now use the lift. Just go upstairs and press the red button again to give you access to it.

Press the up arrow button in the lift, and at the top press the middle button and step out. The lift will go down behind you, but only half way, revealing the rotation controls. Turn the fortress to the north and call the lift. Go down and head to the north island. There you'll find two symbols, which you need to take a note of.

Then hot-foot it back to the fortress and turn it to the east. That's where there are two more symbols. Make a note of them, so that you have a string of four hieroglyphs. Now all you need to do is turn the fortress back south, enter the four icon code into the control panel and — hey presto! — you'll see a hidden room reveal itself. The book inside gets you back to Myst.

Selenitic Age

Check out the tower clue for the spaceship. It should be '59 Volts'. The leaning blue book in the middle shelf of the library also contains a picture of a piano keyboard. Copy that down. Now you're ready for the trip to the Selenitic age.

Go to the power station in the woods. Downstairs you'll find a gauge and some buttons. Press the first and third button on the left row and third and fourth on the right. The gauge should read 59 Volts. Excellent!

Now you can open the spaceship door. And what should you find inside but an organ (of the musical kind). Play the notes from the picture in the book, and match the sound from note number one to the left-hand slider on the control panel across the ship. Match key two's sound to the second slider from the left, and similarly for three, four and five. When you're done pull the control lever, slot machine style. That should bring the picture of a book up on the screen. Touch it to get to the Age...

It's a bit desolate here, but if you follow the path you'll get to a door. To open it you have to get the correct sound for each of a series of sliders. Hmm, sounds familiar... The answers are scattered around the Age at five transmitters. Search them out and turn them on. Note the symbol at each station. This is also where you should find the red and blue pages.

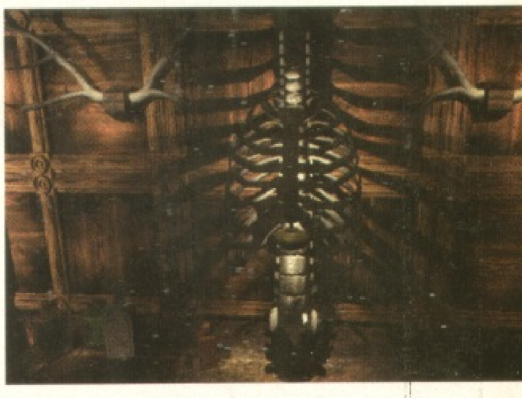
Next head through the wind tunnel to the receiving station and aim each camera at the antennae. Then press the Σ button, and take note of the sound sequence you hear. Back at the door you can now hit the correct code to open it.

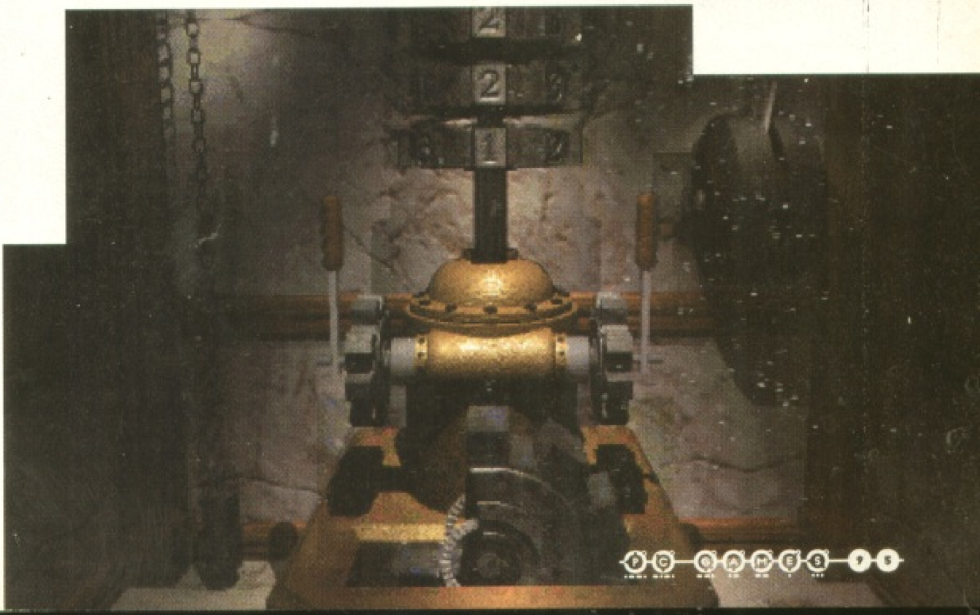
Take the lift down to the MazeRunner and get into it. Head into the maze and listen. The speaker will tell you where to go next at each location. Sound combinations mean half way directions. North is a 'bing', west a weird 'twrr' noise, south is 'clank', and east 'fzzzz'. Bizarre, but if you follow it you should end up going: N, W, N, E, E, S, S, W, SW, W, NW, NE, N, SE.

To reward your maze running abilities, at the end of the tunnel is a book that get's you back to the Myst library.

Channelwood Age

To get to Channelwood, head to the hut in the forest and use 724 as a combination for the safe. Inside is nothing more than a box of matches. Use them on the furnace to strike the pilot light and stoke it up with the big wheel. You'll hear the sound of a lift moving up the big tree that's out the back of the hut. When it doesn't make any more noise, turn off the furnace and run out-





side to the tree. You'll see an open lift falling, and when it reaches ground level jump aboard. It'll take you to a book that teleports you to the watery Channelwood Age.

Go to the windmill on the little rock outcropping, and turn the nozzle of the water tank at its base. This releases the water pressure that will in turn power the all-important lifts.

Heading back outside, go to the first junction and examine the junction box on the floor. The yellow dots show potential water routes. Use these junction boxes to direct water to the lift on the right (left at the first junction, then right, right and right again). Get into the lift and head up to the second floor.

Move forward to the first hut, then go right, right, right, straight and into a hut with a switch. This opens the door at the stairs back down to the ground level. Go down and redirect water at the junction by the windmill to the right. Now go back upstairs and take the lift by the stairs to the third floor.

Upstairs you'll find the two brothers' places, and two pages. There's also a half-page hidden here, which tells you (when you write it out together with the other half — see below) how to get the white page at the end.

Head back to the ground floor and make the water flow left, left and right from the windmill junction. This powers the hidden bridge, and if you turn right on the other side you'll get to the Myst book room. Turn the crank to extend the pipe across the gap and you have power for the final lift.

Stoneship Age

The observation tower should give you a series of dates if you line up the map with the dock. Head back to the round house, and enter the dates into the dentist's chair mechanism. You'll be rewarded by three constellations, which turn out to be the leaf, the snake and the insect if you care to look through the library books.

At the fountain in front of the library is a series of pillars. Each has a constellation symbol. Turn on those three, and the model boat in the fountain will rise. Not only that, but the real thing at the dock will rise too!

Go to the boat — inside the cabin is a book that'll dump you into the Stoneship age...

Have an explore. You should find a crow's nest with an umbrella over it, and three buttons. The left one pumps out the book room, the middle one the tunnels, and the right hand one the lighthouse. Pump out the lighthouse first.

Inside you'll find a chest and a key inconveniently chained out of reach above. Drain the water from the chest and close the drainage valve. Then flood the lighthouse again and — bingo! — the chest will be floating by the key.

Inside is another key, this time for the trap-door to the top of the lighthouse. Upstairs is a generator and a battery pack. Crank the generator till the battery pack's full to give you a few minutes to check out the dark places, and light the beacon.

Hoof it up to the telescope over the wooden bridge and take note of the position of the beacon in degrees.

Next, pump water out of the tunnels and in either one you'll find one of the brothers' rooms and a page. You might also come across the other half page. There's a craftily hidden secret door half way down the passage to the torture chamber bedroom (lovely decor — straight out of House & Home magazine by the looks of it!) and if you go through you'll come to a giant compass.

Click on the button at the beacon heading you got (135 degrees) and head up into the daylight. If at any point the lights go out on you or you hit the wrong compass button, simply fumble your way around in the dark until you get outside and crank the generator some more.

Now you need to pump out the cabin of the ship and head downstairs. The correct compass button will have activated the lights here and you will see a table at the bottom. Click on the table and a book will miraculously rise out of the woodwork. This is your way back to Myst.

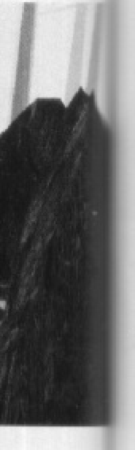
The Grand Finale

So you've collected your pages and put them into the right book. Listen to the message from Sirrus or Achenar (depending on which book you put the pages in). Look into the books on the shelf for the pattern for 158, but before entering it into the fireplace panel make sure that all the marker switches are on and then go to the dock. Turn off that marker switch and take the white page from the hidden compartment.

Now return to the library and go into the fireplace. It's a lift that'll take you to the final room.

To put one over on both brothers (and let's face it, they're pretty slimy characters the pair of them) leave the red and blue pages. Instead, open the green book and click on Atrus' picture. You'll be zipped off to Dunny where you can hand over the white page to him in person.

When he pops back Atrus will give you a tie-in spiel on Myst 2 and you can go back to the island, where you'll find he has destroyed both the red and blue books. Hurrah!



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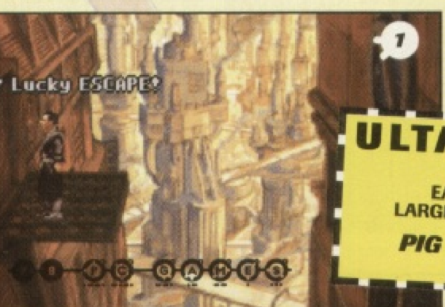
Hey, have you got the Union City blues? Well, prepare to banish them with this complete and supremely easy-to-follow solution to Virgin's smart graphic adventure...

Beneath a *Steel Sky*

YOU!
THAT WAS WHEN JOEY PIPED UP...
FOSTER! SENSORS DETECT INCOMING AUDIO SOURCE!

1. Sneaky!

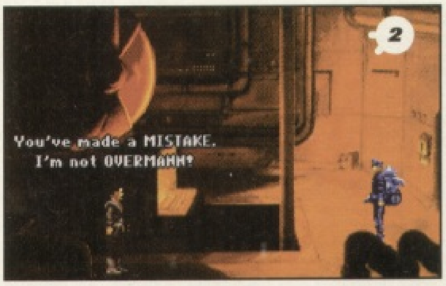
Intro over, Foster finds himself standing on a high walkway. Break off the rung poking out of the wall to your left, and use it to lever open the door to your right. After the animation, return inside, go down the stairs and enter the room to the right. Use the circuit board on the bits of junk. Once you've re-animated Joey have a chat to him. Step on the lift. An alarm will sound and Hobbins will appear to investigate. Quickly enter the room on the right, open the cupboard and take the spanner...



Phew! Lucky ESCAPE!

2. Joey'll fix it

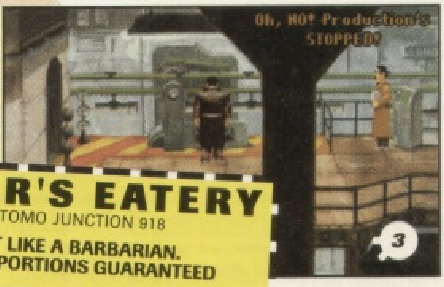
Return to the lift room and examine the big transporter droid, then chat to Hobbins. Now get Joey to fix the droid. When the droid activates the lift, jump down the hole underneath. When Joey turns up, ask him to open the door. After the brief — but gruesome — animation, search Reich's body and take his belongings — he won't need then any more! Leave and go up the stairs, then enter the second doorway on your right — you're now in the factory. Chat with Anita and, when Lamb arrives, tell him you're Security...



You've made a MISTAKE.
I'm not OVERMANN!

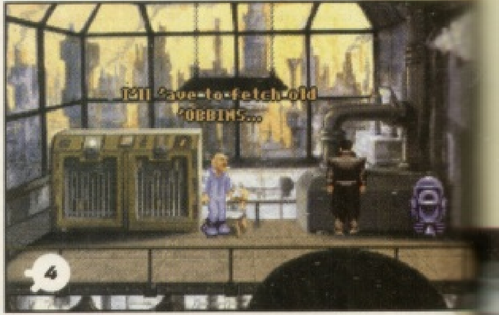
3. A cog in the works

Go right, put the spanner in the machine's cogs then remove it. Go left, examine the droid and then use the spanner on it. Talk to Joey about a new shell, then go right. Try entering the storeroom, then ask Joey to check it out. When he returns, ask him to disable the fusebox — you can watch him at work through the window. Once he's finished, enter the storeroom. Pick up the walkway and then the small piece of putty underneath — talk to Joey and he'll tell you that it's plastic explosive...



Oh, NO! Production's STOPPED!

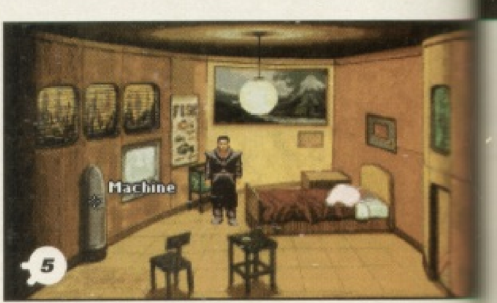
ULTAR'S EATERY
OTOMO JUNCTION 918
EAT LIKE A BARBARIAN.
LARGE PORTIONS GUARANTEED
PIG OUT COMPETITION
EVERY SATURDAY



I'll have to fetch old 'OBBINS...

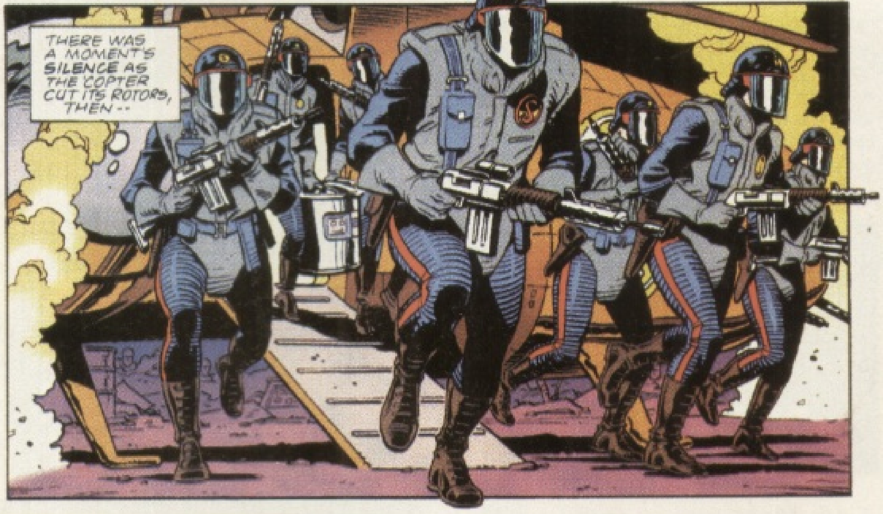
4. Gimme steam

Leave the factory and enter the doorway to the far left of the 'street' — this is the steam room. Use the spanner on the buttons to loosen them, then ask Joey to press the button on the right, and simultaneously press the button on the left. When the old geezer leaves, flip the switch on the left of the room. Remove the light bulb and replace it with the putty. Flip the switch again to reveal yet two more switches — pull the one on the right. Leave and go to the lift. Use Reich's card on the slot and enter. Going down...



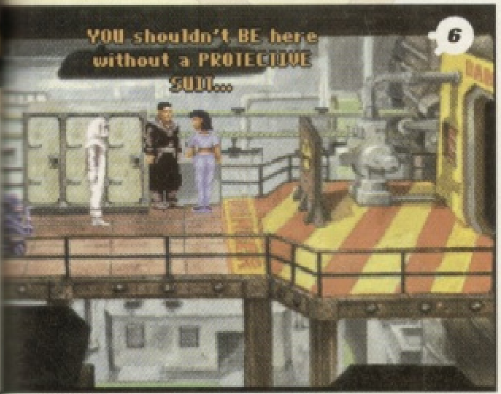
5. Robbing the dead

Walk left and enter the doorway. Use Reich's card on the left slot to enter his apartment. Move the pillow and take the magazine underneath. Leave, walk right, back past the lift and enter Travelco. Chat to the bloke behind the desk about everything. Hand him the magazine and take the ticket. Leave and go and wait outside Reich's apartment. Lamb will eventually appear — talk to him, and when he mentions going away give him the ticket...


THERE WAS A MOMENT'S SILENCE AS THE 'COPTER CUT ITS ROTORS, THEN --

6. The grand tour

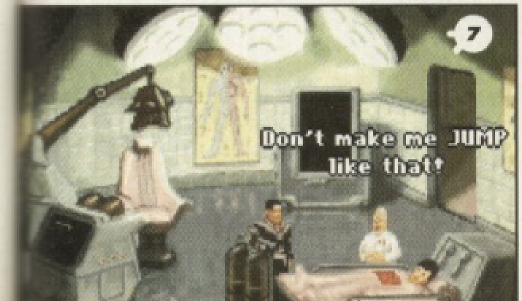
Make your way back to the factory. Talk to Lamb, who'll take you on a tour. Once he leaves you, go right and chat to Anita. When she asks for your ID, give her Reich's. Talk to her about everything — especially the Schreibmann Port. Leave the factory and use Reich's card on the LINC terminal near the lift. Select 4, get past the copy protection, then select 2, 1, 1 again and then 2. Exit and wait for Lamb. Chat to him and he'll let you enter his apartment. Before you go, however, look at the red cable to the right of the screen and get Joey to cut it...


6

YOU shouldn't BE here without a PROTECTIVE SUIT...

7. Selling your body

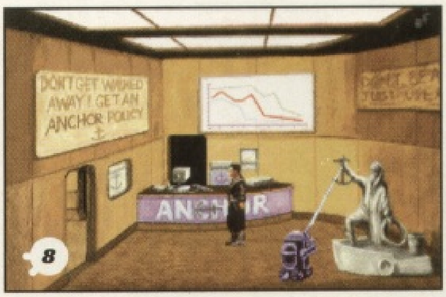
Go down in the lift and pick up the cable. Return to the apartments and use Reich's card on the slot to the right. Enter Lamb's apartment and use the machine to the right. Pick up the video and leave. Walk to the far left of the 'street' and enter Burke's BioSurgery. Chat with the hologram, then ask Joey to persuade the hologram to open the door. Enter and talk to Burke. Offer him your testicles and he'll give you the Schreibmann Port. Talk some more about all and sundry then leave...


7

Don't make me JUMP like that!

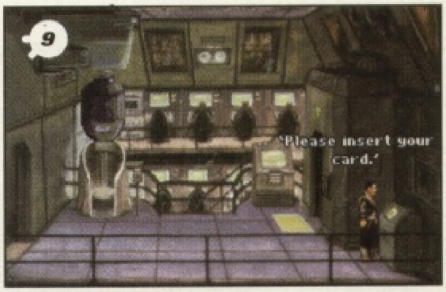
8. Anchor's away

Go right until you find Anchor Insurance. Examine the statue, then chat to the man about everything (as always). Ask about the special policy — and tell them Burke sent you. When the man leaves, ask Joey to use his welder on the anchor, and pick it up when he's finished. Leave and make your way up to the next level again...


8

9. Schwing!

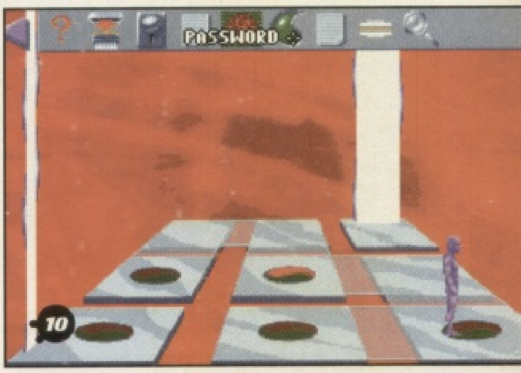
Enter the doorway to the right of the steam room's entrance — you'll find yourself back where you started! Walk upstairs and go out onto the high ledge. Use the anchor with the cable, and then use your improvised grappling hook on the Security sign on the building opposite. Wheee!!! Go through the door to your right, and use Reich's card in the slot next to the interface. Sit in the interface and prepare to enter LINC-space...


9

'Please insert your card.'

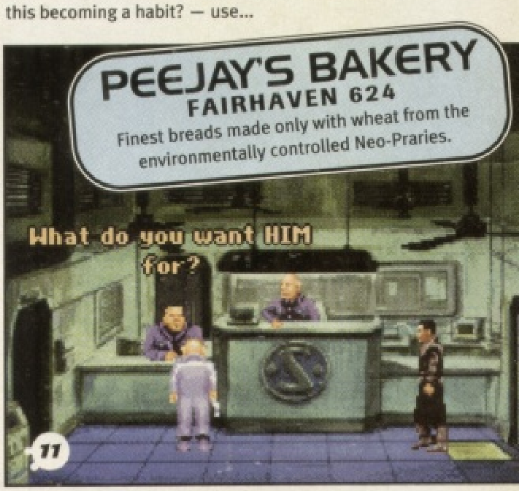
10. LINC-space!

Pick up the ball. Go right, use the OPEN program in your inventory with the carpetbag and take the two items. Use DECOMPRESS with the compressed data and DECRYPT with the document. Go right and use one of your PASSWORD programs with the floor. Now go right again and put down another password. Then go left and pick up the password. Now go up, put down a password, go right, go down, pick up the password, go up, put down a password, go left, pick up the password, go up, go right, go down, go right, go down, put down a password, go up and up again, then finally exit the room. (Phew! Did you follow that?) Collect the bust and the book, then decrypt your two new documents. Now DISCONNECT...


10

11. All Reich now

Use Reich's card with the LINC terminal and select 4. Enter the security number and select 1. Read all the documents and then select 0. Now select 2 and then 2 again. You now have special authorisation, so exit the system. Use Reich's card in the slot next to the lift and use the lift to go down to the Security Station. Leave as soon as you arrive and head for the other lift. Use it and then go left to the next lift, which you should — is this becoming a habit? — use...


11

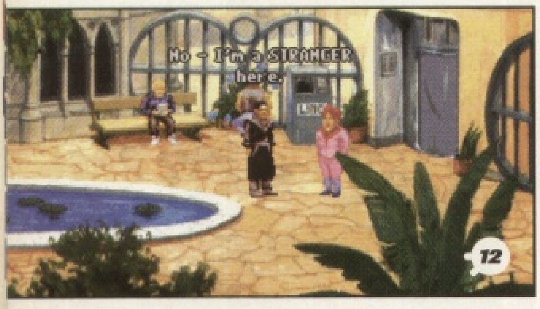
PEEJAY'S BAKERY
FAIRHAVEN 624
Finest breads made only with wheat from the environmentally controlled Neo-Praries.

What do you want HIM for?

WE'RE LOOKING FOR SOME-ONE.
SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T BELONG HERE...WHO WASN'T BORN IN THIS GARBAGE DUMP...WHO CAME FROM THE CITY AS A CHILD...

12. A dog's life

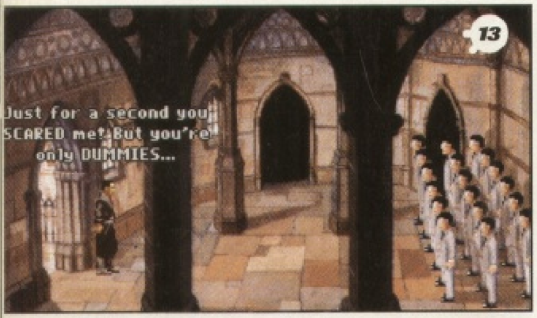
Wait outside the lift for a fat woman and her dog to appear — talk to her. Now go left and talk to the doorman. Find Mrs Piermont again and ask her to sponsor you. When she makes her call, put the video in the VCR. While the dog is distracted, look at the dog bowl, take the biscuits and then leave. Go through the exit to the bottom-left of the screen and examine the wooden double doors. Use Reich's card on the lock and walk through. Pick up the secateurs and leave...


No — I'm a STRANGER here.

12

13. Church service

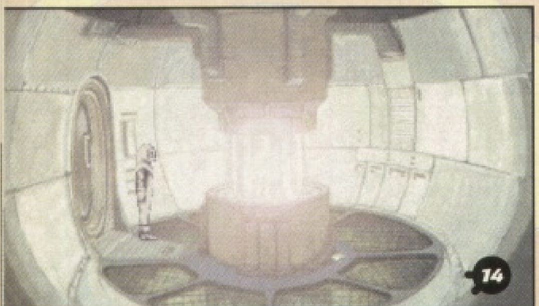
Go right and up through the top-left exit. Use the biscuits on the plank and wait for Mrs Piermont and her pooch to turn up. When the dog starts barking, pull the rope. This will distract the guard long enough for you to enter the cathedral. Go through the middle exit and open all the lockers. Now leave and return to the top level via the lifts...


Just for a second you SCARED me! But you're only DUMMIES...

13

14. Catch those rays

Enter the factory and go to where you last saw Anita. Put on the rad-suit from the middle locker and head right. Access the control panel, select 2 and then exit. Enter the reactor room and pick up Anita's card — it's lying to the right of the core. Leave and close the door using the control panel. Go left and change back into your trusty coat, then leave the factory...


14

15. Back in LINC-space

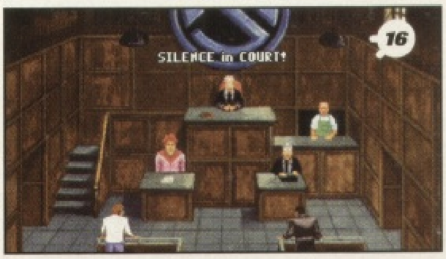
Make your way back to the LINC-space interface via the Security Station's lift. Use Anita's card in the interface slot and sit in the chair. In LINC-space, go right and use the BLIND program with the eyeball. Quickly go into the upper exit, then go up again and use the PLAYBACK program with the well. Make your way back to the room you where you entered LINC-space and use the BLIND program on the eye. Then go back to the well room, go through the top-right exit and pick up the tuning fork. Now disconnect and leave the Station building...

15

If that's YOU, Rob, listen CAREFULLY...

16. Meet you in court

Go to the ground level and talk to the gardener outside Mrs Piermont's house — he'll tell you that his name is Eduardo. Go left until you reach St James' Club, which you should enter. Talk to everyone then leave. Enter the doorway on the left to go to court, where you should defend Hobbins. Return to the club and activate the jukebox. When Colston, the club manager, gets up, quickly go to his table and take his glass. Examine the metal plate next to the door at the back of the club and then leave...


SILENCE in COURT!

16

17. Bar & grill

Make your way back to Burke's BioSurgery and give Burke the glass. Now return to St James' Club. (Sore feet yet?) Go to the door near the back of the roo, use the metal plate and then enter. Use the metal bar on the packing crates, then move the wooden lid over to the box. Get on the box and use the bar with the grill. Now use the secateurs with the grill and climb through into the narrow passage. Go right, and then go through the top-right exit. Go right again and then SAVE YOUR GAME!

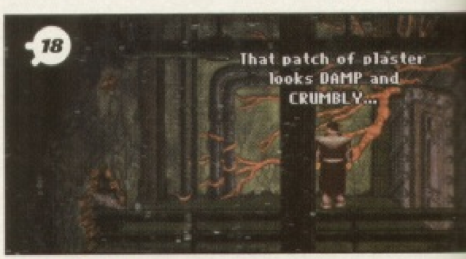
HAH! WELCOME TO THE GAP, ROBERT!
YOU'RE ONE OF US, NOW.

PC GAMES MAGAZINE CORP.
GRANVILLE HIGHTS 303
We are proud to be the No.2 Magazine producer in Union City.
Using the original staff, PC GAMES reads as good today as it did when your grandfathers read it!

17

18. Plastered!

Do not walk past the hole in the wall until you've found the light-bulb socket, which is in the hand-rail to the left of the hole. Use the light bulb with it. Go right and SAVE YOUR GAME! Continue going right, and quickly click on the bottom-right exit to run to safety. Look above the vein on the wall to find some plaster. Use the metal bar on the plaster, and then on the brickwork underneath. Pick up the brick. Use the metal bar on the swelling in the vein, then use the brick on the bar. Grab the bar, and go through the door to your right as soon as it opens...

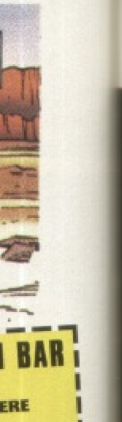

18

That patch of plaster looks DAMP and CRUMBLY...

IT WAS THE DAY THE TRIBE FOUND ME...
THE DAY OF THE CRASH...
THE DAY MY MOTHER DIED.

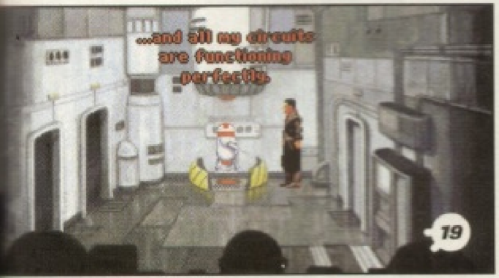
CELESTIAL SANDWICH SUSHI BAR
OTOMO JUNCTION 127
YOU WANT FAST FOOD • COME HERE
GOOD EATING • BUSY EPICURE

l you've
d-rail to
Go right
ght, and
safety.
plaster.
on the
e metal
brick on
to your



19. Doctor Joey

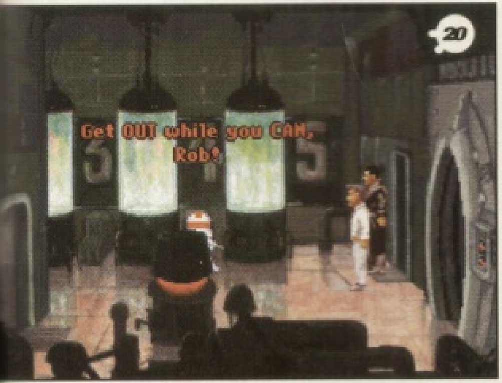
Look through the grill, then head through the middle exit. Again, SAVE YOUR GAME! Access the control panel, select 2 to reduce the temperature, then exit. Climb onto the iris and tug at the bar hanging from the ceiling, then get off the iris straight away. Go left, then right and right again. Put Joey's circuit board into the medical droid, then tell Joey to check out the tank room. When he returns, grill him for information. Tell Joey to go and open the tap in the nutrient room, and wait for him to return. Then, go through the top-left exit...


...and all my circuits are functioning perfectly.

19

20. Android antics

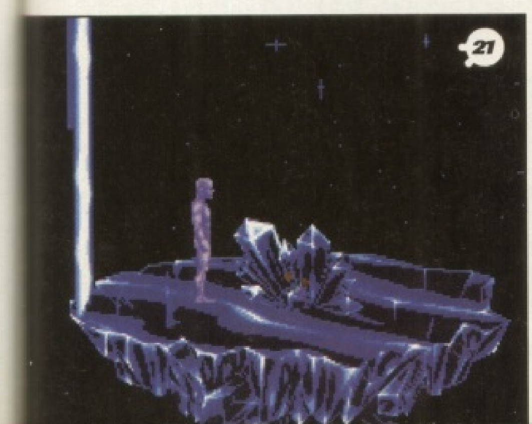
In the tank room, head through the top-right exit, and then the top-right exit in the next room. Use Reich's card with the terminal and select 2, then 1, then exit. Go left. After the animation, get Joey's circuit board from the droid, then take the ID card from Gallagher's corpse. Go through the top-right doorway, use Gallagher's card in the interface slot and access LINC-space...


Get OUT while you CAN, Rob!

20

21. Divine madness

Go right and use the BLIND program on the eye, then go up. Now use the DIVINE WRATH program on the crusader and then disconnect. Now use Anita's card on the interface and access LINC-space again. Go right, blind the eye, go up and then right. Use the OSCILLATOR program on the crystal and pick up the helix, then disconnect...



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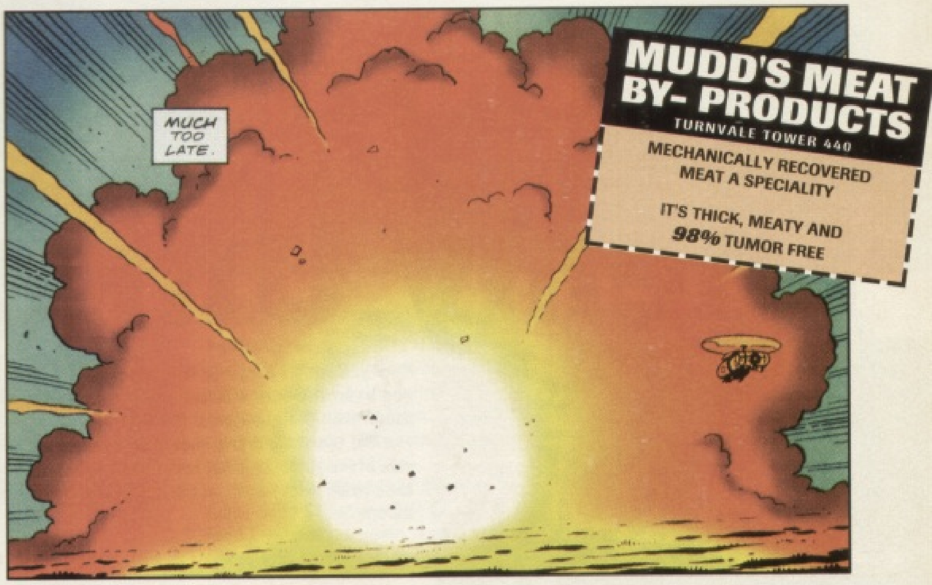
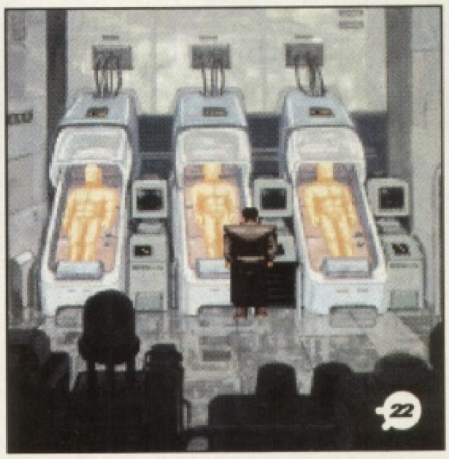

MUCH TOO LATE.

MUDD'S MEAT BY- PRODUCTS
TURNVALE TOWER 440
MECHANICALLY RECOVERED MEAT A SPECIALITY
IT'S THICK, MEATY AND **98%** TUMOR FREE

22. Cold comfort

Go left, then go through the bottom-right door. Use Anita's card with the console. Pick up the tongs to the right of the glass tank, and use them with the glass tank. Use the tongs with the huge tank to freeze the tissue. Go right. Open the cabinet to the right of the middle android, and put Joey's board inside. Access the console and select 2, then 0, then 3. Chat with Joey, then retrieve his board...



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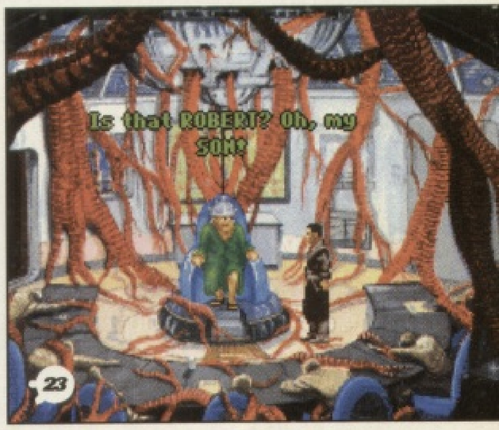

Is that ROBERT? Oh, my SON!

23

23. Father's day

Go right. Ask Joey to place his hand on the lock sensor, and simultaneously place your hand on the other sensor. Go right, and then right again. Use the cable with the pipe support, then climb down the rungs. Use the tongs with the orifice, then SAVE YOUR GAME! Use the cable to swing into the room. After the animation, quickly tell Joey to sit in the chair. Now sit back, relax, watch the rest of the story unfold and remember — BE VIGILANT!

WE'RE GOING TO HIT!
MAYBE I'D GET SOME ANSWERS NOW.
IF I SURVIVED ANOTHER 'COPTER CRASH...

Chryssalid

UFO: Enemy Unknown

Aliens kidnapping your citizens, mutilating your cattle and generally being a bit of a nuisance? You need these tips, then...

Getting started

First of all check your soldiers and sack any that have a firing accuracy of less than about 60. Keep firing and recruiting soldiers until you have 10 good marksmen. This will probably take some time but don't worry because the funding countries won't kick up a fuss as long as you shoot the UFO's down with your interceptors. By the way, you don't have to go for each and every UFO with your Skyranger — if you do, the larger ones are the most worthwhile.

Call
Europe
FUNDS $34 853 154
BUILD NEW BASE
BASE INFORMATION
SOLDIERS
EQUIP CRAFT
BUILD FACILITIES
RESEARCH
MANUFACTURE
TRANSFER
PURCHASE/RECRUIT
SELL/SACK
GEOSCAPE

Buy 3 Avalanche launchers and missiles and equip your interceptors with Avalanches only. They are undoubtedly the most efficient. While you're at it buy some Electro Flares and put them on your Skyranger. They come in handy for your graveyard shifts, so to speak.

As for your soldiers, equip them with rifles and grenades and then hire 30 more scientists and 10 more engineers. Let your scientists research laser weapons technology to produce laser rifles for your soldiers.

If you still have money left, start building your second base. The most efficient way is to build the bases roughly on the equator. If the first one is located in Florida, the second one should be built on the other side of the globe, let's say in India or in Africa. The next base could be in Japan, on the tiny pacific islands, or in Europe.

Close Encounters

Now you should be ready for your first encounter with the aliens. If you've shot down a UFO, save the game. If it's dark, wait until daybreak before you send your Skyranger in. If you can't wait, don't forget the Electro Flares. Move your soldiers under your Skyranger first and let them check the area. Turn them around on the spot, until you've covered the surroundings, then cautiously move them on, always leaving them some movement points for their automatic reactions.

Chryssalid autopsy

The exo-skeleton of this creature is extremely tough, but surprisingly vulnerable to explosive ammunition. The brain is well developed, and its cell growth rate very fast. The creature carries twenty eggs which are laid inside other organisms. This creature is a very effective terror weapon.

After a successful fight you'll return with a lot of useful stuff. Don't sell it all, let your scientists research it. Start with Alien Alloys (which leads to Personal Armour) and then go for Heavy Plasma (which leads to Plasma Beam). If you've already researched Plasma Beam, equip your interceptors with these weapons as soon as possible.

Keep all Elerium if possible. It will be important later in the game. (Of course, if an alien attack on your base leaves you with 5000 units of Elerium, you can sell 4000.)

Aliens & Mind Control

If you are too successful, the aliens will start attacking your bases. Sometimes they'll terrorise cities as well so just send out your Skyranger and get rid of them.

The aliens can only mind control your soldiers if at least one alien can see them. There are three types of aliens who can do this: Sectoid Leaders, Sectoid Commanders and all Ethereals.

Buy stun rods and try to catch one of them alive (having built an Alien Containment first, of course.) Research the living alien. After that you can build a Psi Lab and develop your soldiers' psionic abilities. Some soldiers will get mind controlled easier than others, so sack them.

Recruit and sack soldiers and train them until you've got at least 2 or 3 with a psionic strength of 90 or more. Put your super brains on your Avenger (see below) or Skyranger and let them mind control the aliens. Even if they don't succeed in the beginning, the practice will accelerate the development of their skills. Once their psionic abilities have reached 50 or more, they even can control Ethereals.

Preparing for the Showdown

Try to catch living alien navigators, physicians and engineers to research them. Alien navigators or engineers can tell you something about alien crafts and their weapons or about new facilities for tracking UFOs.

Finally you'll have to catch a few alien commanders. They'll tell you something about "Cydonia". Don't waste your time and money with weak interceptors. Research the Avenger, send it to Cydonia and kick some alien butt.

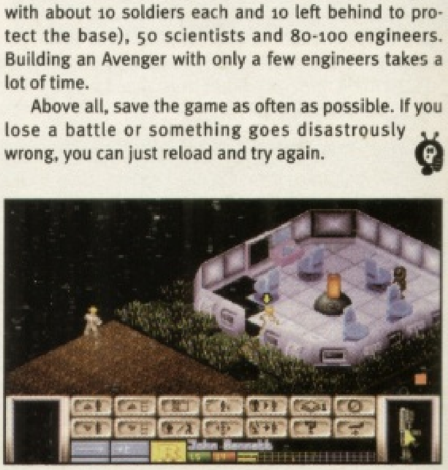
Let's get Tactical

You can use the Blaster Launcher like a can opener. Use your own entrance and send your soldiers through this hole. Why bother with heavily guarded doors huh? If you don't need anything from the craft, simply shoot it to pieces with 4 Blaster Launchers and send in 2 or 3 soldiers to clean up the rest.

In a base, try to find the control room as soon as possible. The first Blaster Bomb goes through the tiny window at the side and opens a hole in the second wall. The second Blaster Bomb goes through this hole to the elevator, then go up and left or right. Enjoy the explosions! Even if you don't like this style of fighting, it's worthwhile seeing it. You can find the elevator even in complete darkness. If you put the cursor on it, you'll see the elevator rays.

In the middle of the game, you should aim to have 5-8 bases. In the first base you should have two Psi Labs, two Workshops, 20-30 Soldiers (two Avengers with about 10 soldiers each and 10 left behind to protect the base), 50 scientists and 80-100 engineers. Building an Avenger with only a few engineers takes a lot of time.

Above all, save the game as often as possible. If you lose a battle or something goes disastrously wrong, you can just reload and try again.



cheat lab

Welcome to the Cheat Lab, fellow gamesplayers — a firm handshake and a playful pat on the back to you all. Yes, once again it's time to delve into the files and drag out the mini tips, the itsy-bitsy cheats and teeny-weeny hacks for all those games you know and love. So here goes...

Pagan: Ultima VIII

Origin

It's the ultimate RPG challenge (or arcade adventure challenge, depending on your point of view) and despite the fact that we spent literally hours on our comprehensive playing guide, there's bound to be some of you who want to hack and cheat right away. Want, want, want, that's all we ever hear at PC GAMES, but we're not harsh. Far from it. Okay, we couldn't give a damn on Tuesdays between 4pm and 6pm, but generally we're generous, caring individuals who you'd probably quite like if you met us socially. Er, yes, anyway, here are those U8 cheats...

Following this handy guide (also sent in by the very talented Mr C.Lee of Walthamstow), you can enhance the characteristics of the Avatar to god-like proportions. Simply log into the Pagan SAVEGAME directory and locate the savegame file you want to edit, i.e u8save.001, u8save.005, etc.

If you don't have a hex editor, you can use DOS Debug just as easily. Simply type in the following:

```
DEBUG
NU8SAVE.00?          (where ? is the
                      savegame no.)
L                    (loads the file)
E05F8                (strength)
78
E05F9                (intelligence)
78
E05FA                (dexterity)
78
E05FB                (hit points)
F0
E0625                (mana)
F0
W                    (writes the file)
Q                    (to quit Debug)
```

If you do have a file editor like Xtree or PC Tools then you can also edit the savegames by changing the following hex values.

Hex offset	Change to	Result
04	F878	120 strength
04	F978	120 intelligence
04	FA78	120 dexterity
04	FBF0	240 hit points
05	25F0	240 mana

Jurassic Park

Ocean

It seems that we've gone absolutely level code crazy this month and for those of you stuck in the Stegosaurus paddock or lost in the aviary, why not skip straight to the nifty 3D bit by using these Jurassic level codes?

(1) B12A556B
(2) 3B5FB56B
(3) 0377D56B
(4) 607AF56B
(5) EB8FD56B
(6) 8B8FF56B
(7) AB90156B
(8) 4B90356B

Lemmings 2

Psygnosis

Now available at a knock-down budget price, if you type in the following line — and type it in exactly mind — you'll be transported into the secret Lemmings cheat mode.

Go into the Lemmings directory and type: echo Cheat = 1 >> L2.INI. Now load Lemmings 2 again, select preferences and select the cheat mode. Ta-daa!

Wolfenstein 3^D

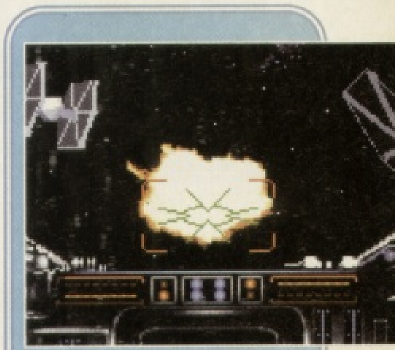
Id Software

In Extremis? Pah! Corridor 7? A pale imitation. As you can now buy the original and complete Wolfenstein 3D adventure for a mere £19.99 from Mindscape, Dave said to me, "Dean, how about some cracking Wolfenstein 3D tips." So here they are.

To enter the Wolfenstein cheat mode, start the game by typing WOLF3D goobers. If you now hit ALT and SHIFT and BACKSPACE you will find that by pressing the TAB key and a letter you can do all of the following things.

TAB + G	God mode
TAB + W	Warp levels
TAB + S	Slow motion
TAB + B	Change border colour
TAB + T	See sprites
TAB + C	Statistics
TAB + I	Free items
TAB + E	End level

Stuck in an adventure? Do you know any hot tips for todays top PC games? If the answer to either of these questions is 'Yes' grab a postcard and send your tips or queries to us at: Cheat Lab, PC GAMES, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. You never know, you might even win a software prize.



X-Wing

LucasArts

Just a quick cheat for all you rebel pilots out there still struggling valiantly against the Empire. Apparently if you press W, I and N at any time during flight, both your shields and your lasers will stay at their maximum levels.

Battle Isle 2

BlueByte

There's no denying that Battle Isle 2 is a superb strategy game and it will take some time to complete. But if you don't want to take 'some time' and would rather take 'no time at all' then here for your enjoyment are the all-important level codes.

(1) AMPORGE
(2) JORGWAI
(3) GEGIDOS
(4) WABODAE
(5) BUFASWE
(6) GEHAUWA
(7) OLARIBU
(8) FITORGE
(9) DAFATWA
(10) WABIKDO
(11) GEEUSAT
(12) KAIMAWA
(13) SIETIBU
(14) GEDEROM
(15) ULUARGE
(16) ABUNDWA
(17) LANADGE
(18) WAFEFAL
(19) BUSALUG
(20) GEKEFZU

IT'S NOT OUR FAULT!

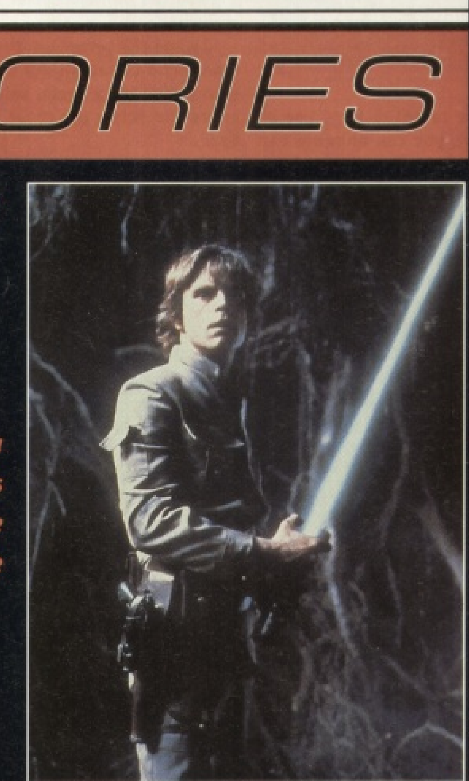
PC GAMES can not be held responsible for loss of data or for the tips failing to work properly or for anything strange and bizarre that might happen to you and your PC within the next 153 years. You use these tips at your own risk. If anything goes wrong it's your fault. Just wanted to make that bit clear.

STAR WARS MEMORIES

With LucasArts' eagerly-awaited TIE Fighter due for release any day now, and three brand new Star Wars movies gearing up for production, Alex Fraser takes a look at the previous attempts to capture the magic of Star Wars in home computer form...

A long time ago in a cinema far, far away... I sat in the stalls at the Newcastle Odeon, transfixed by the movie that was to change the face of science fiction cinema, as well as the face of my lunchbox, my pencil case, my bedroom walls, my bookshelf... oh yeah, and my video games.

Considering that the Star Wars trilogy only consisted of three films (which explains the use of the term 'trilogy' — doh!) it's been the source of a disproportionate number of video games. More games than I can imagine, in fact. And I can imagine quite a LOT.



PART I THE SAGA BEGINS

The Star Wars video game saga began in the world's arcades in the early 80s. Atari acquired the licence for the three movies and kicked off the series with (appropriately enough) Star Wars, a vector 3D re-run of the Death Star attack which came in cool sit-down cabinets.

The game put you in the cockpit of an X-Wing, blasting TIE Fighters and deflection towers, before sending the player down the trench to dodge turbo-laser fire and trench-blocking gantries. Plant your proton torpedoes in the ol' thermal exhaust port and you'd made it to the next level where — slightly unrealistically — you got to destroy the Death Star all over again.

This went down a treat with the zillions of SW fans, and Atari hastily followed it up with (you guessed it) The Empire Strikes Back, a replacement board for the original cabinet. The gameplay was pretty much the same, only this time you piloted a snowspeeder, zapping probe droids and tow-cabling AT-ATs, then took to the cockpit of the Millenium Falcon to blast more TIEs and dodge asteroids.

For the last in the series, Atari abandoned the vector graphics approach and Return Of The Jedi turned out to be a scrolling isometric-3D shoot-'em-up. This disappointingly put an end to the 'Skywalker's eye-view' which was one of the main attractions of the other games, and you couldn't help thinking that chasing speeder bikes and navigating the Death Star's innards would have been much more atmospheric and enjoyable in the original 3D format.

PART II THE CONSOLES STRIKE BACK

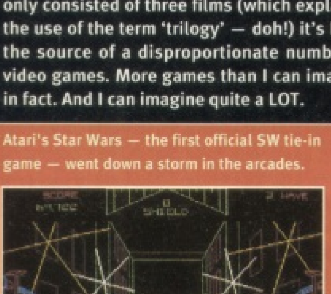
Even as early as 1982, the Star Wars video game marketing bandwagon was at work on the home market. The rights to Star Wars titles on the Atari VCS console were snapped up by Parker Brothers who stuck out two games, a bizarre top-viewed lightsabre fight called Jedi Arena and The Empire Strikes Back, a smart Defender-style game in which you had to blast AT-ATs from your snowspeeder.

But this was a dark time for consoles as everyone switched their allegiances to Spectrums and C64s. Domark produced successful conversions of the arcade games, but it wasn't until 1991 that JVC brought a new hope to Star Wars revivalists, releasing a series of platform games for the Nintendo Entertainment System and Super NES. The first of these, based on Star Wars and Empire (unsurprisingly), were huge worldwide successes, and JVC is no doubt hoping that Return Of The Jedi, due out towards the end of this year, will fare much the same...

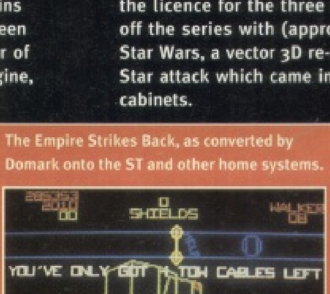
PART III A NEW HOPE

As enjoyable as these aforementioned games were, it took the power of big PCs to really 'bring the

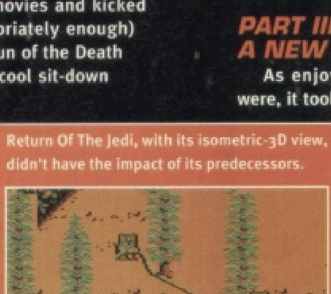
Atari's Star Wars — the first official SW tie-in game — went down a storm in the arcades.



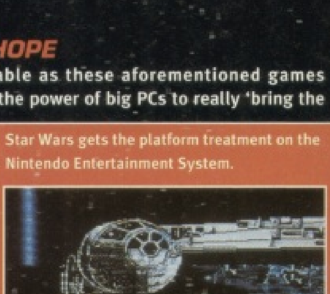
The Empire Strikes Back, as converted by Domark onto the ST and other home systems.



Return Of The Jedi, with its isometric-3D view, didn't have the impact of its predecessors.



Star Wars gets the platform treatment on the Nintendo Entertainment System.



Star Wars legend home', as it were. And fittingly it was LucasArts, the software-producing arm of LucasFilm — the very company that created the Star Wars movies — which pulled it off.

First and finest of the LucasArts Star Wars games was X-Wing, which fulfilled every SW fan's dream by letting them pilot an X-Wing fighter (or, indeed, an A-Wing or a Y-Wing) into combat against the Empire. X-Wing gave you over 50 cleverly constructed and massively varied missions to take on, and when you'd beaten those you could invest in two equally excellent mission disks, Imperial Pursuit and B-Wing.

What really made the game is that it was all so fantastically authentic in just about every aspect, from the 3D graphics and the digitised sound effects to the music (the film score was piped through Lucasfilm's iMUSE system) and, most importantly of all, the thrilling action. The Force is strong with this one.

Towards the end of last year LucasArts built on its X-Wing success with Rebel Assault, a visually-stunning shoot-'em-up on CD-ROM. It played much like a cut-down version of X-Wing, in which the player took on the Skywalker-esque role of a humble Tatooine farmboy who joins the Rebel Alliance and, after various action-packed adventures, got the chance to deliver the fatal blow to the Death Star.

Although the gameplay was very simplistic and the amount of freedom of movement you had in the flying sequences was limited, this won critical acclaim simply because of its superb atmosphere. Each action sequence was linked by animated cut-scenes, complete with digitised speech, that explained the plot's progression in an amazingly movie-like way. Indeed, it's arguably the best stab at an 'interactive movie' so far.

However, if you preferred your SW gaming a little less action orientated, there was always Star Wars Chess from Software Toolworks. Sadly, however, if you were expecting a PC version of the Hologame played by Chewbacca and R2-D2 on the Millennium Falcon then you were in for a disappointment.

This, you see, was a version of good old Earth Chess, but with SW characters as the pieces. As in Interplay's Battle Chess, the pieces were all animated so when the Darth Vader king took a Rebel soldier pawn, he actually drew his light sabre and cut him down. Slightly naff graphics meant this wasn't actually as impressive as it could have been, but Dave Kelsall likes it — or at least he likes the idea.

新世代CGシューティング!!
STAR WARS
STAR WARS
GUNNER
PILOT
SEGA

Sega's Virtua Star Wars, coming soon to an arcade near you.

A GALAXY OF GOODIES!

Quick to spot the money-spinning potential of his characters, George Lucas set up his own merchandise production company in 1978. This spawned the every-little-boy-still-has-them Star Wars figures and spacecraft.

Then there were the jotters, jigsaws, pencil cases, light sabres, Han Solo blaster pistols, cuddly Ewoks, Star Wars bedspreads, Star Wars cookies, Return Of The Jedi tea trays, dinner services... Just about any object that could have a logo stamped on it became Star Wars merchandise, and most of this stuff is now very highly prized as collector's items.

To cater for the new breed of Star Wars fans (many of whom weren't even born when the first film appeared) the Lucasfilm marketing machine is still churning out the goods. Get down to your local comic shop and you can pick up the new Bend 'Em figures (bendy plastic action figures of key cast members), Topps Collector's Cards, Micro Machines sets (becoming rarer every day, these) and, of course, the 20th Century Fox wide-screen videos. If you still haven't invested in the video collection watch out for the imminent collector's set which comes in a Darth Vader helmet.

THE ART OF STAR WARS GALAXY
STAR WARS
STAR WARS TRILOGY
Micro Machines
RETURN OF THE JEDI
TALES OF THE JEDI
GUIDE TO THE STAR WARS UNIVERSE
DARK EMPIRE
4 PIECE
Luke Skywalker
AT-ST

Thanks to Forbidden Planet and Another Dimension for all the stuff.

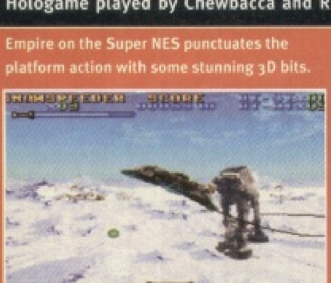
PART IV
THE SAGA CONTINUES

So what of the future? With three new movies in production, the first of which is scheduled for 1997 release, SW fever is building all over again.

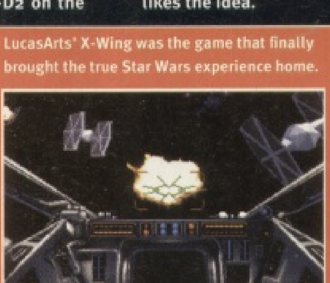
In acknowledgement of this, last year Sega announced Star Wars, the next in its Virtua series of arcade games, which uses the latest custom graphics chips to generate fast 3D vector graphics as once again you're flying an X-Wing zipping over the Death Star. Star Wars has yet to be seen in the UK, but Sega's previous Virtua games have all been outstanding and there's no reason why this one shouldn't be even better.

Obviously, the company best positioned to cash in is LucasArts. Although their precise plans are unknown, it seems likely that in the near future we can expect to see data disks for TIE Fighter. And following the success of Rebel Assault, a sequel of some sort seems inevitable. More excitingly, rumours of Star Wars-themed graphic adventures continue to circulate — tie-ins with the new movies, perhaps? We'll just have to wait and see...

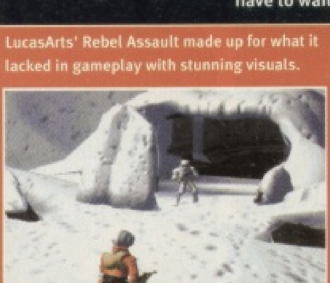
Empire on the Super NES punctuates the platform action with some stunning 3D bits.



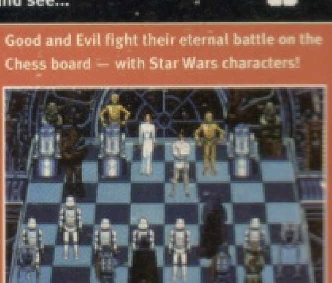
LucasArts' X-Wing was the game that finally brought the true Star Wars experience home.



LucasArts' Rebel Assault made up for what it lacked in gameplay with stunning visuals.



Good and Evil fight their eternal battle on the Chess board — with Star Wars characters!



DR SPANNER'S CASEBOOK

Meet a new member of the PC GAMES team — Dr Spanner. Over the coming issues, he'll be your guide through the PC hardware jungle. To kick things off, Dr Spanner invites you to listen up as he reveals the secrets of...

TECHNICAL EXPERT
PC
Dr. Spanner
PC Stuff

Soundcards

CHOOSING YOUR SOUNDCARD

Most of the advice you're given when buying a hi-fi applies equally as well to buying a soundcard. For a start, the sound quality gets better the more cash you part with — no surprises there. What you have to decide is whether there's enough of a difference in quality between a £100 card and a £150 card to make it worth your while — it's all very personal.

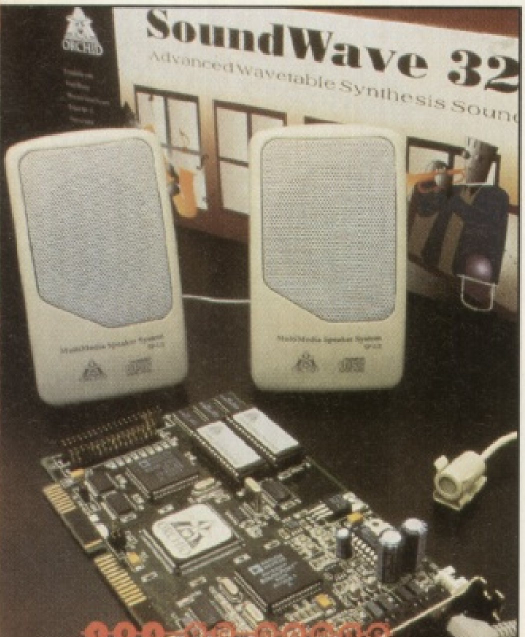
Bottom of the scale are the 8-bit FM cards. These are pretty much obselete, but make a passable noise if you're only after the basics and don't want to spend more than £60 or so.

Next step up are the 16-bit FM cards. And they sound, well, twice as good as 8-bit cards and, to be honest, they should be more than enough to satisfy the needs of most gameplayers.

At the top of the pile we have wavetable soundcards. Wavetable cards make a nicer, cleaner noise than FM, but they also cost more and they aren't always that well-supported by games.

But before you rush out and splash the cash, there are a couple of things to remember. Games tend to support a few of the best known cards. Other cards have to make do with a spot of emulating (or faking it...). So if you're not sure, play safe and go for the card you see listed most often in your games.

Also, if you're only going to use the soundcard when playing games, then with the more expensive cards you're paying for a lot of features you don't need (music sampling stuff, mostly).



FITTING *YOUR SOUNDCARD*

Fitting a soundcard is a piece of cake. Honest. The only catch is that you have to get your hands inside the PC to do it — and having shelled out best part of £1,000 on one of these overgrown Lego sets, it's easy to see why people can be a teensy bit edgy about delving inside one for the first time.

But fear not — Dr Spanner's step-by-step guide to stuffing a soundcard into the nearest likely-looking socket while not getting yourself electrocuted is all you need.

PART ONE: TAKING IT TO BITS AND LOSING THINGS...

(1) Two things before we get into the "Here's one I prepared earlier" bit: (a) turn off the PC before you start fiddling around inside it; and (b) have a flick through the paperwork with the soundcard first.

DR SPANNER *RECOMMENDS*

As I said elsewhere, buying a soundcard is largely a matter of personal taste. To give you a start, though, below I've listed my favourite cards, grouped according to price...

Cheap 'n' Cheerful

Sound Blaster Pro
Creative Labs ● (0743) 248590 ● £79
An old faithful — it sounds okay(ish) and is the closest thing you'll get to a standard on the PC.

Middle Of The Road

Sound Blaster 16
Creative Labs ● (0743) 248590 ● £115
A solid FM soundcard, which can be upgraded to wavetable sound with an add-on.

Orchid GameWave
Orchid ● (0256) 479898 ● £149
Cut-down version of the SoundWave 32 that offers gameplayers excellent value for money.

Sound FX Classic 3000
Bluepoint ● (0908) 277007 ● £149
With FM *and* wavetable it can take on more expensive cards with ease. Highly recommended, but it could do with a Sound Blaster Pro emulation for games.

An Arm And A Leg

Orchid SoundWave 32
Orchid ● (0256) 479898 ● £199
Top-quality wavetable sound, very hard to trip up with games but limited CD support

Sound Blaster AWE32
Creative Labs ● (0743) 248590 ● £229
The new top-of-the-range Sound Blaster. Impressive, but it's too early to tell how stable it is yet.

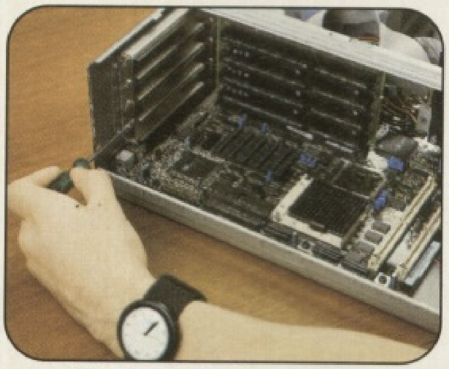
Advanced Gravis UltraSound Max
Zye Technology ● (0293) 538666 ● £229
Sounds absolutely fabulous, darling — it even has 3D sound. Can still be temperamental at times, though.

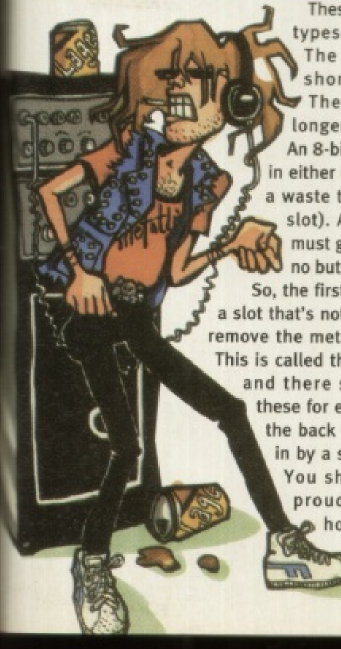
Or, to put it another way, read the bloody manual before you wade in — if only to check that you've got everything you need and that the manufacturers haven't added any last minute 'vital' instructions on some miniscule scrap of paper at the bottom of the box. They're like that.

(2) Right, let's get started. First you need to get inside the PC. Usually the casing is held on by four or five Philips screws at the back. Undo these (try not to lose the screws...) and slide or lift off the case. You're in.

mega
Boomer

(3) Provided you didn't buy your PC from Del Boy, it'll have a motherboard — that's the big green thing with lots of chips and other bits on it. On the motherboard you should be able to see a number of connectors about half an inch thick and eight inches long. Some will already have circuit boards sat in them — such as your video card and the disk controller card.



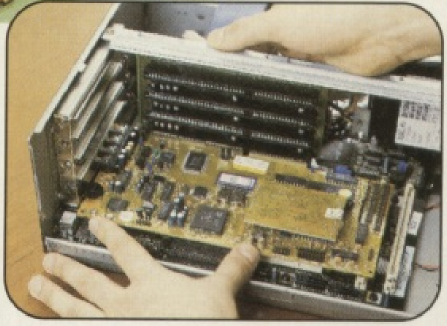


These slots come in two types: 8-bit and 16-bit. The 8-bit slots are shorter, single slots. The 16-bit slots are longer and split in two. An 8-bit soundcard can go in either (though it's a bit of a waste to put it in a 16-bit slot). A 16-bit soundcard must go in a 16-bit slot — no buts.

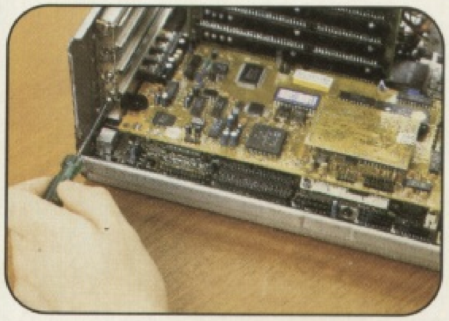
So, the first thing to do is find a slot that's not being used. Then, remove the metal plate next to it. This is called the 'blanking plate', and there should be one of these for each slot, sitting on the back of the PC and held in by a single screw. Voila! You should now be the proud owner of a thin hole in the back of your PC...

(4) ...And you're ready to fit the soundcard in place. Take the card out of its anti-static bag. Treat it fairly gently — don't stick it on a radiator or play frisbee with it — and try and hold it by the metal plate and the top edge (not the edge with the thin gold connectors).

Position the card so that its gold-edged connectors are above the slot and the metal plate is where you removed the blanking plate. Push the card in carefully, but firmly.



(5) Now search around frantically, and swear a couple of times beacuse you can't find the screw you removed from the blanking plate. Find the screw. Fix the card in place.



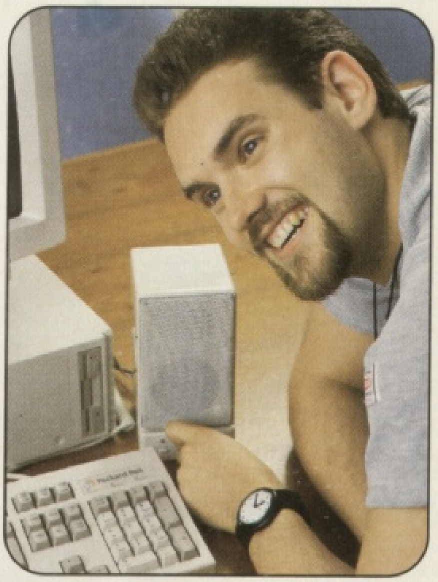
PART TWO: IQ OR IRQ?

The software comes next — it should've been supplied on a floppy disk with the soundcard. Don't screw the PC's case back on yet — there's an outside chance you may have to change something on the motherboard before you're done.

Turn the PC on, and once you're powered up insert the first installation disk. The software should hold your hand from start to finish. There's only one dodgy bit to watch out for. At some stage it'll prompt you to chose IRQ, DMA and Address settings for the sound card. To keep life simpler, try and use the default settings. Write these settings down — you'll have to know what they are when you install new games or new cards.

(6) When you've completed the software set-up, hook up some speakers and give it a test run. The speakers plug in to a socket on the soundcard's metal plate at the back of the PC. Most cards come with a joystick/MIDI port, Line Out (to speakers), Line In and Microphone sockets. If you're lucky, the sockets will be labelled — if not, you'll have to look in the manual to tell which is which, or simply try them one by one.

Speakers usually need batteries or a mains adaptor, but you can use them (unamplified) without — you just have to make sure the speakers are turned OFF first. Unfortunately, most PC speakers are junk. If you can, buy an audio jack from somewhere like Tandy, and connect the soundcard to your stereo.



PART THREE: NOTHING'S HAPPENING

If there is a problem — something minor, like a complete lack of sound — there are a couple of things to check first before running back to whoever sold you the soundcard and smacking him over the head with a wet fish.

First off, check that the speakers are connected properly. Then check that the card is firmly in its slot inside the PC.

After that, the most common and irritating problems come from IRQ and DMA conflicts. If you have another card in your PC — say one that controls a fax — it could be using the same settings, in which case the soundcard will refuse to play ball. Go back to the software set-up program for the soundcard and change the settings (there may be a test program to help with this), reboot the PC, and then check that you've set your games up for the correct settings.

If that doesn't work, feel free to go out and find that fish.

OBSESSION
H2O

PCG

The complete guide to game jargon

Baffled by all the over-complex terms used by games-playing cognoscenti to describe even the simplest game? Now be baffled no more — all is explained down below...

ADVENTURE
Adventures were among the earliest form of computer game and were originally text-only. Messages on the screen told you where you were and what you could see, and you played the game by typing in basic English commands such as GET JEWEL AND GO WEST. The closest we have to adventures nowadays are the *graphic adventures* and *RPGs*, where on-screen *characters* explore worlds under *icon* control. The basic concept hasn't changed much, however.

ARCADE GAME
An action game, often based upon a *scenario* taken from the amusement arcades, in which you control an on-screen character, space ship or other entity. Scoring is an important element of arcade games, usually accomplished by shooting aliens, reaching higher levels, collecting treasure or whatever. Reflexes, rather than brainpower, are the key to success.

ATTRIBUTES
Usually refers to '*character* attributes' — the particular skills enjoyed by a character in an RPG. Examples are strength, magic power and dexterity. Attribute levels are normally determined before you start play through a combination of chance and choice. Once you start playing, your *characters* increase their scores for each attribute as they grow in experience, enabling them to tackle more demanding situations.

BACKGROUNDS
Graphic backdrops in *arcade games* against which the action takes place. See also *parallax* scrolling.

BUDGET GAMES
Games normally retail for £30 or more. Older titles (or compilations thereof), however, are frequently released 'on budget' at a fraction of their original cost.

CD-ROM
An acronym for Compact Disk Read-Only Memory; a CD with a game on it instead of Nirvana. A CD-ROM can hold up 600Mbs of data, giving ample space for enhanced game graphics and sound. The most striking use of all this space is to store and display compressed video and films on your PC. The latest industry-standard compression systems can hold just over 70 minutes of *full-motion* video on a single CD.

CHARACTER
Characters in games may be under your direct control or looked after by the computer. You can often talk to them, fight with them, even fall in love with them. As a general rule, however, characters are there either as obstacles or as oracles. Treat them accordingly.

CLONE
As in 'Space Invaders clone'. A game that blatantly copies the style of another release. Sadly, plagiarism is common in the games industry, though less so than in the early 80s when almost all games were 'clones' of Japanese coin-ops.

COIN-OP
A game designed for play on a coin-operated unit in an amusement arcade. A coin-op *conversion* is a coin-op *scenario* adapted for play on a PC. Almost all coin-ops are *arcade games*, though some companies have experimented with simulators and others with puzzle games.

CONTROL OPTIONS
Most games provide alternative means of controlling the action — some people prefer using a joystick, some a mouse, some the keyboard. The more control options, the better.

CONVERSION
The re-programming of a game so that it will run on a different computer. The quality of conversion varies — just because a game was a success on the Amiga doesn't mean that it will be as enjoyable on the PC.

DATA DISK
Some games are designed to accept additional *scenarios*. Once you've played through the main story, you can purchase a data disk with a new challenge. Data disks are used in conjunction with the original disks and cost less than buying a new game.

DISK ACCESS
Games need to access lots of information during play. This information is taken from disk but can be stored in memory for faster access. Poor program design, however, may require frequent disk accesses, slowing down the game.

END-OF-LEVEL GUARDIAN
Many *shoot-'em-ups* require you to defeat a particularly hostile enemy at the end of each level.

FLICK-SCREEN SCROLLING
The opposite of *scrolling*. When you move your game figure to the left of the display, the program clears the screen and replaces it with a new display, showing the adjacent location.

FRAME RATE
The speed at which the display is updated. As in cinema, a speed of around 15 frames per second is the slowest frame rate at which action on the screen appears smooth. Games which present complex 3D displays rarely reach this figure; arcade games, with simpler 2D graphics, often exceed it.

GAME ENGINE
The core program that controls a given game's major functions. For example, TFX stunning images are generated by a '3D game engine'.

GRAPHIC ADVENTURE
Now one of the most popular forms of computer entertainment. A map is divided into graphic locations and you can see your *character* moving about in response to your commands. Similar to an *arcade game*, but gameplay revolves around puzzle-solving and there are many more commands available. A good example would be LucasArts' Day Of The Tentacle or Sam & Max.

GOD GAME
A generic term for games that simulate complex environments incorporating social, economic and ecological systems, such as the recent smash hit Sim City 2000.

GOURAUD SHADING
This is a way of 'smoothing out' the colour transition across polygons and thus giving a more natural, rounded look to otherwise blocky and rectangular 3D objects.

ICONS
Graphic symbols on-screen that enable you to control the action by clicking on them with the mouse. For example, clicking on a icon with a hand illustrated on it may result in picking up an object.

INTERACTIVE FICTION
Fancy words for *adventure*, used by people who are too ashamed to admit that they play games.

INTERACTIVE MOVIE
Grandiose term applied by games publishers to products they wish to sell more copies of. If such a thing could ever truly exist, it would require gargantuan amounts of storage for all the graphics information.

INVENTORY
List of objects 'held' by the player's *character* during a game.

LEVELS
Usually found in *arcade games*, where the action is divided into successive yet independent phases.

LICENSE
Many publishers seek higher sales by acquiring licenses to well-known names in other media, i.e. Indiana Jones, James Bond, The Terminator, etc. Unfortunately, the cost of the license often means that the development of the game suffers due to lack of funds. May also apply (as in 'coin-op license') to the *conversion of a coin-op* game to the PC.

LOCATION
In adventures the game-world is split up into small areas. The 'current location' is the player's position in the game.

NPC
Short for Non-Player Character and refers to any *character* in a game that is controlled by the computer, not by you.

PARALLAX SCROLLING
Scrolling technique which layers the background of the display according to its imagined distance from the player. Each layer is then scrolled at a different speed, giving a more realistic impression of 'depth' into the screen. In a racing game, for example, the trees beside the road will flash by, but the mountains in the distance will remain almost stationary, just as in real life.

PARTY
Role-playing games (RPGs), popularised by the American board-game Dungeons & Dragons, involve a group of players who each assume a 'role' in the adventure (e.g. that of a warrior or thief). This group is known as a party.

PIXEL
A corrupted truncation of 'picture element'. A pixel describes the tiny coloured dots that together form a monitor's display.

PLATFORM GAME
A common gameplay style, in which the display is divided up into platforms. The player must therefore master the skills of jumping from one platform to another without falling between them and avoid both patrolling monsters and other obstacles. Recent examples are Fire & Ice and Zool.

PLAYABILITY
That magic quality which separates the turkeys from the

rest of the flock, this refers to a combination of control method, game mechanics, graphics, sound and originality, all of which conspire to make a game enjoyable to play.

POLYGON
The basic building block for games which depict the action in 3D. Unlike sprites, which are pre-drawn images stored in memory, polygon-based objects are drawn and redrawn several times a second by the computer according to their angle and distance to the viewer.

POWER-UP
A bonus awarded to the player, especially during *shoot-'em- ups*, which results in enhanced game ability (e.g. jumping higher or more powerful weapons). Power-ups are frequently represented on-screen as objects that you have to collect.

RAY TRACING
3D graphics technology that involves the calculation of light patterns on surfaces, thus adding realism. See *rendering*.

RENDERING
Once a 3D artist has constructed a model of a particular object or scene (group of objects), he then defines light sources, texture maps and other criteria. Finally, the scene is rendered: a lengthy process that calculates light paths and reflections and their interaction with textures, surface angles etc, creating a final image that is often photo-realistic.

ROLE-PLAYING GAME (RPG)
Game style which combines the elements of an *adventure* game with the multiple player-character approach of boardgames like Dungeons & Dragons *(see party)*. In the computer version, the party of friends is replaced by a party of computer-controlled characters, which you either recruit within the game or create before you start.

SCENARIO
The storyline, environment and objectives of a game. Additional scenarios for use with a game may sometimes be purchased on *data disks*.

SCROLLING
Refers specifically to the scrolling of the display or background in a game. There are three types: 'horizontal scrolling', which moves the image from side to side, most often used in *arcade games* where the character runs along the ground; 'vertical scrolling', where the screen image moves from top to bottom, often used in *shoot-'em-ups* where the aliens descend from above; and 'multi-directional scrolling' where the display constantly moves to reveal new areas, whatever direction you are moving in.

SHOOT-'EM-UP
A classic game genre in which you shoot everything that moves. If it doesn't move, you shoot it until it does.

SIMULATION
Applies to any game that attempts to replicate the workings of a 'real world' situation or vehicle, such as IndyCar Racing or Falcon 3.0.

SPRITE
A mobile graphic element: an alien, for example, or the player character itself as it moves around. Most sprites get shot.

STATE OF THE ART
Anything that looks good this month.

STATUS PANEL
Area of the screen giving information about your character's health, the environment or other game features.

STRATEGY
Game-style often dependent on the management of resources, as the player attempts to control an organisation, situation or environment.

TEXTURE MAPPING
Polygon-based objects look more realistic if each surface is shaded with a pattern, giving some indication of the surface's texture: rough, smooth, shiny and so on. These patterns are stored as 'texture maps'.

VOXEL SPACING
A programming technique employed for drawing detailed, realistic 3D landscapes, as seen in games such as Commanche: Maximum Overkill and CyberRace. The only drawback is that the results can look a touch 'blocky' and blurred at times.

The name's Erskine. Christina Erskine. And if you've got a technical problem, I've got a not-so- technical solution. That's why they call me...

THE TROUBLE SHOOTER

Traumatised from Trowbridge has been on the line this month. "I can't take it any more," he sobbed. "I've got to do something with XMS – or is it EMS? — and I don't know what it means". Stop whimpering, Traumatised, you've come to the right place.

Name: EMS, XMS

These are going to be two of those computer acronyms, aren't they?
Of course. EMS stands for Expanded Memory System, and XMS for eXtended Memory System, which is very confusing when you realise that they could equally well be the other way round.

And why do we need them?
Back in the mists of time, some boffin decided that 640K was an absolutely massive amount of memory and that DOS would never need to access more than that. So it can't. But as we know today, 640K is pretty tiny. So various companies have banded together to come up with methods by which more memory can be addressed by today's sophisticated programs — games, most of the time.

Why are there two of them? Why can't we just have one memory system, or whatever you said?
Good question. A bloody excellent question, in fact. Expanded memory was the first type of memory management to be invented/developed/discovered. It works by moving data in and out of little blocks in the first megabyte of RAM. A bit unwieldy, but early versions could work on old XTs and 286 PCs which back in the 1980s was a Useful Thing.

Extended memory came along a little later. It works on memory over the first megabyte and if you have a 386- or 486-based PC, you can divide up your RAM into bits to be used as extended and bits to be used as expanded.

So much for the history lesson — what do they actually do?
They offer alternative ways of managing PC memory over and above 640K. If you have, say, a 386 or 486 with 2Mb of RAM, that extra memory has to be configured either as expanded or extended memory.

And how do I do that?
Have a look at your CONFIG.SYS file (don't tell me you don't know what that is — we did CONFIG.SYS in the last issue). You should see this as the first line:

```
DEVICE=C:\DOS\HIMEM.SYS
```

Got it? Congratulations! That's your extended memory driver file. More specifically, it's MS-DOS's extended memory manager. Next you should see the line

```
DEVICE=C:\DOS\EMM386.EXE
```

Now you're really motoring — this is your expanded memory driver file. It might be in the Windows directory rather than the DOS directory, and it's also possible that you are using different memory managers, but these are the ones that come with DOS and Windows, so we'll stick with them for the time being.

So that's it then? Stick a couple of lines in CONFIG.SYS and no more worries?
Don't be silly. Of course it's not that simple. We're talking about PCs here, remember.

All right, what's the catch?
Well, all you've done by including these lines is to tell DOS that you do indeed possess a memory manager. You haven't told it to do anything with them yet. Many programs can auto-detect memory managers and use your extra memory the best way they can, but some want you to be more specific. Now suppose you have a game which wants one megabyte of expanded memory. Now your expanded memory line needs to read like this:

```
DEVICE=C:\DOS\EMM386.EXE 1024
```

That '1024' at the end tells DOS to allocate 1,024 bytes, which is one megabyte (don't ask, just trust me on this one), as expanded memory.

And how exactly am I supposed to know what a game requires?
Usually it will say in the manual. In fact, there's a bit of a trend at the moment for games to use every ounce of spare memory that they can — SimCity 2000 and Doom, for example. In this case, you might need to tinker around a bit with device drivers to free up enough memory. Also, if you simply disable the expanded memory manager from CONFIG.SYS, then all your extra memory becomes extended by default.

"Disable the expanded memory manager"? — sorry, you've lost me.
By disable, I just temporarily 'remove' it. You don't want to delete the line altogether because you'll only have to put the line back at a later date. So, instead, add the word REM to the beginning of the line, thus

```
REM DEVICE=C:\DOS\EMM386.EXE
```

REM stands for 'remark': what it says to DOS is that this line is now just a comment and not to be treated as a command to be carried out. If you want to be really clever-clever about it, add this line as well:

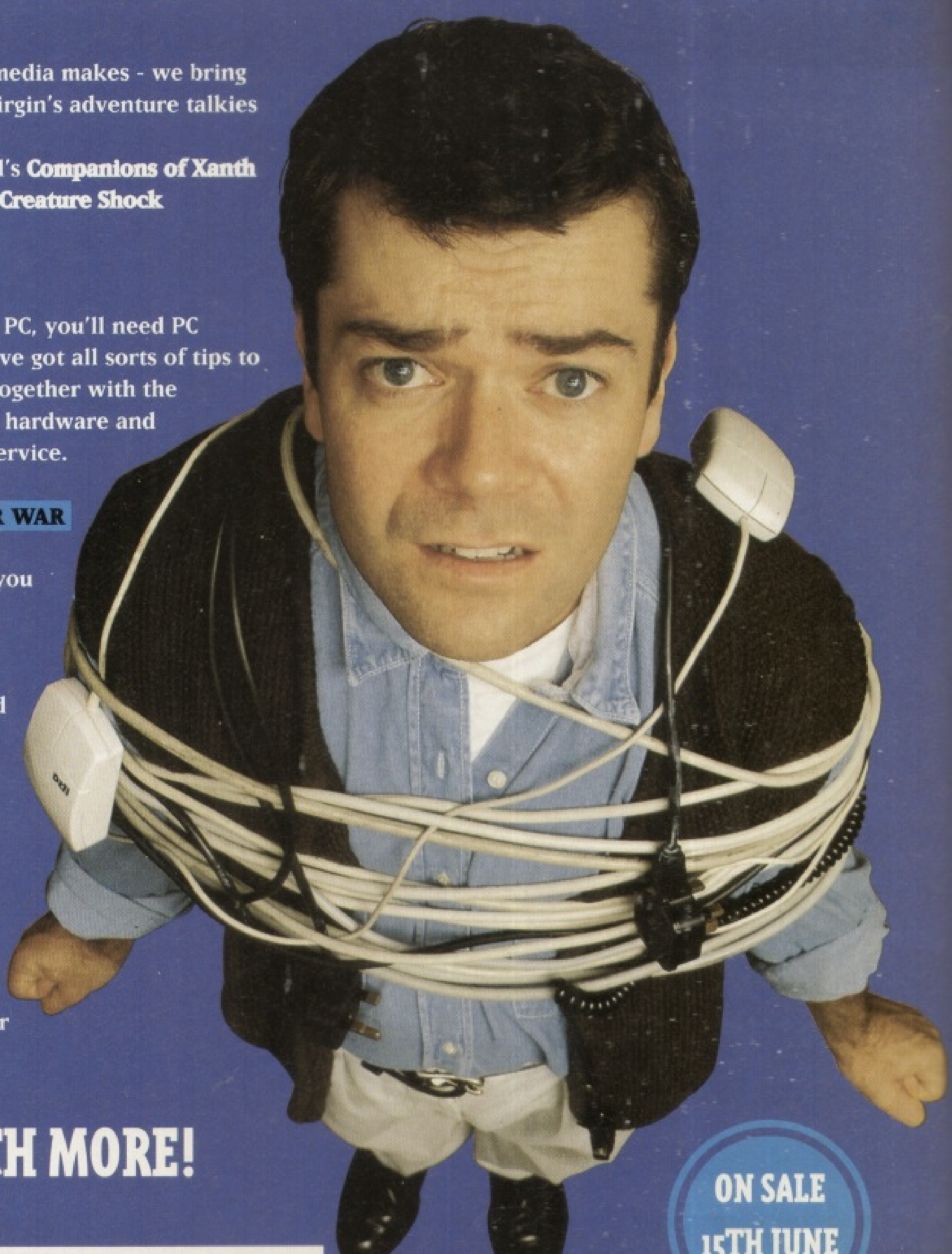
```
REM TAKE OUT EXP MEMORY LINE TO PLAY DOOM
```

Another comment — this time to remind you what configuration you need for Doom. So next time Doom won't run, and you turn forlornly to CONFIG.SYS to try to remember what to do, there's a handy note for you. I'm great, aren't I?

Another day, another soul out of torment. If you've got a problem with your PC that needs a spot of troubleshooting, drop me a line and we'll talk it through. And when I'm not being the Troubleshooter, I've got a day job as editor of PC REVIEW, sister magazine to the very wonderful PC GAMES. PC REVIEW covers the whole gamut of PC entertainment and includes a Technical Help section, in which you can find more detailed versions of the articles which appear in this section.

PC REVIEW

IN THE JULY ISSUE OF PC REVIEW...



● FREE CD-ROM!

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PC REVIEW-YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO PC ENTERTAINMENT

Letters

Wow!
Within weeks of the first issue of PC GAMES hitting the streets, we were swamped by literally several letters from our new readers, and here they are. Keep 'em coming!

Dear PC GAMES,

With all the PC games magazines around making a choice as to what to read can sometimes be difficult... UNTIL NOW! The only word to describe PC GAMES is 'brilliant': brilliant demos, brilliant reviews and previews — I can't wait to get Battledrome and kick some metal butt. I could go on but suffice to say you're firing on all cylinders/Warp Factor Ten, Mr Spock/Head & Shoulders above the rest. [Er, thank you... I think — Ed.]

However, I would like to make a point if I may. Other magazines (mentioning no names) have in the past pigeonholed certain gamers, i.e. role-players, as sad, anorak-wearing, no-personality, head-in-the-clouds-type people. Please don't fall into this trap — if I want to lock my door and play on my computer for hours on end then that's my business. Leave me alone — I'm happy.

As a closing shot, can I add that those people who say computer games are bad for you can stick it in their ear, pal. I'm an ambulance man and, as you can imagine, my job can get pretty stressful at times. Playing on my computer gives me a much-needed break from reality.

Geoff Hedges,
Borehamwood, Herts.

Here at PC GAMES we've got no intention of pigeon-holing anybody, Geoff — I mean, some of my best friends are role-players. What you do behind closed doors is a matter for you and your conscience.

* * *

Dear PC GAMES,

I wish to congratulate you on a truly excellent magazine. Please try and keep it up. The features were great, although I was a bit peeved to see that neither Spindizzy nor The Sentinel was mentioned in 'From Tiny Acorns...' On the whole I found your reviews were excellent too — Cannon Fodder and Pacific Strike in particular stood out.

One of the few low points was the Shareware section. This isn't America where people can download the latest Shareware titles — in good old Blighty we have to send off for it by post if we want our phone bills to remain reasonable, and then on top of that you have to register it if you wabt to fully enjoy the software. Because of this I think Shareware titles should be put under the microscope as their commercial counterparts are, and given a proper review with an overall rating.

By the way, I like Monitorman, but what the hell is it? It looks like a ladybird in combat boots!

Steve Hyatt,
Wallington, Surrey.

Glad you enjoyed the magazine, Steve — we'll definitely be doing our best to, er, 'keep it up', as you put it. On the subject of Shareware reviews, if you turn to this issue's Shareware section you'll see that all the games covered now receive a rating. Is that more to your liking? Incidentally, Monitorman isn't a ladybird in combat boots, it's a monitor in combat boots. With antennae. That just happens to look a bit like a ladybird.

Dear PC GAMES,

I'm getting seriously worried. Just a few months ago I bought a 33MHz 486 in the misguided (it would seem) belief that I was going to be the proud owner of the ultimate set-up for PC gamesplaying. Although it cost a bomb, I felt safe in the knowledge that at least it was going to be fairly 'future proof', and that it would last me for two or three years.

Then what happens? The Pentium is announced, offering higher performance, and games like Pacific Strike appear, which you reckon is pretty useless on anything less than a 66MHz 486! Have I bought a pig in a poke? Should I sell my 486 and get a Pentium? And, even if I do, who's to say that Intel won't then announce a '686' chip, thus rendering the Pentium obsolete?

George Connors,
Middlesborough.

Don't panic, George. You'll be perfectly okay with the PC you've bought for a good long while yet. The computer market is notoriously fast-moving, with newer, higher-spec machines being launched practically every month — you can't halt progress — and whichever machine you buy there will always be a bigger and better one just around the corner. The Pentium, although powerful, is hugely expensive, and for the price it's not really worth having as 99.9% of all current games run more than fast enough on a 33MHz 486.

* * *

Dear PC GAMES,

I've just finished reading your 'Lights! Camera! Interaction!' feature, and very good it was too. However, your suggestion that Woody Allen would make an excellent Bernard if they ever made a Day of The Tentacle movie got me thinking.

How about a film of The Secret Of Monkey Island, with Michael J. Fox as Guybrush Threepwood and Brian Blessed in heavy make-up as LeChuck? Or Leisure Suit Larry: The Movie, with Jack Nicholson as the eponymous hero? The list is endless!

What does everyone at PC GAMES think of my ideas?

F. Millar,
Liverpool.

Forget that, Paul — how about PC GAMES: The Movie? It'd be brilliant. You could have the late John Candy as Dave Upchurch, and Clyde the ape from Every Which Way But Loose as Dave Kelsall, and...

* * *

Dear PC GAMES,

Congratulations on issue one of an enjoyable and informative magazine.

In response to Imp's column on sex, I'd like to say that I too would be interested in seeing games with more adult themes — and I don't mean adolescent 'boobs and guns' fantasies either. Witness SimCity, for example — a complex, open-ended scenario where you set your own objectives and go about achieving them in your own way.

Now, if that sort of depth could be applied to a game dealing with personal relationships, moral dilemmas and ethical decisions, then I think that computer games would finally be approaching adult status. And what about a political scenario, or a 'thirty-something' game dealing with issues such as AIDS, childbirth, mortality and sexuality? The potential is boundless.

Neil Hopkins,
Sheffield.

Dear PC GAMES,

I am in total support of the views expressed by Imp regarding sex in computer games — I couldn't agree with his comments more. One of the main reasons I bought a high-spec multimedia PC was because there are more advanced, mature games available for it, and I hope this would increase in the future.

Being an expensive machine, the PC is by its very nature bought by older people, for which software developers will hopefully develop ADULT games.

R. Anderson,
Ryhope, Sunderland.

This is just a couple of the many letters we had agreeing with Imp's column last month. Of course, at the end of the day it's all down to the software developers and publishers — when will one of them be brave and bold enough to address adults subjects, like sex and sexuality, in a computer game? If the PC games market is ever going to appeal to more than just a small fraction of the public, soon one hopes...

* * *

Dear PC GAMES,

I loved the first issue of PC GAMES, but one thing confused me. Could you please explain what a 'ú' is? It cropped up several times throughout the magazine whenever money was discussed. Is this the new symbol for the ECU, perhaps?

R. Springer,
Banbury, Oxon.

Oh-ha-ha, 'well spotted'. Look it was a mistake, alright? We write our copy on PCs, you see, which is then ported across to a Mac to be designed. Unfortunately, somewhere in the conversion process a small bug crept in. We're sorry for any confusion caused, and will try to do better in the future. We're only human, you know (except for Dave Kelsall, who's half-monkey).

IF YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE with the group, write to us at: Letters, PC GAMES, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. Alternatively, flash gits can Fax us on: 071-972-6710. Who knows? If your letter's good enough, you could win a prize...

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A superb NEC triple-s

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The Small Print

This competition is not open to employees of EMAP Images, their relatives or their friends. The competition closes on the 28th of August 1994, and the winners will be notified shortly afterwards. No alternative prizes will be offered. The Editor's decision is final, and no correspondence will be entered into. While every care is taken, we cannot accept any responsibility for entries lost or damaged in the post.

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WE LIVE IN A BRUTAL, FAST-MOVING, HIGH-TECH WORLD, where those who can't keep up get left behind. Take PCs, for example. Used to be that you could get by quite happily with a 286 equipped with 5.25" floppy drive and nothing else. Ha! Not any more — these days, if you haven't got a 486 with a 200Mb+ hard drive then you're stuffed! And the same applies to CD-ROM drives — single-speed models just don't cut it anymore. Which is why we, in conjunction with Ocean Software, purveyors of fine quality software since quite a while ago, have decided to present this little competition. The prize? A fantastic top-of-the-range NEC triple-speed CD-ROM drive. And not just one of 'em — we've got three of the damn things to give away!

The three winners will also receive a copy of Central Intelligence, Ocean's smart new spying 'n' strategy game which is reviewed on page 54 and, rather aptly, is only available on CD.

HOW TO ENTER

IN KEEPING WITH CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE'S 'CLOAK AND DAGGER' scenario, we want you to put yourself in the shoes of a top spy like James Bond, as played by Sean Connery, not Roger Moore because we don't like him very much.

Detailed below are five situations that, as a top spy like James Bond played by Sean Connery, you might find yourself in, each of which is followed by three possible actions you could take. Using your skill and judgement, pick the option that you feel would best resolve each situation.

Now, on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope, write down your decisions. For example, if you think that the best way to resolve situation (1) is by sitting down and having a nice natter about the weather, etc (i.e. option 'a'), then write (1) a on your entry.

Finally, not forgetting to add your name and address, send your entry in to us at: I've been expecting you, Mr Bond Compo, PC GAMES, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

All entries must reach us by the 28th of August 1994, when the three winners will be picked out of a big attache case that releases tear gas when opened by enemy agents. Or, if we can't find any gas masks, we'll pick them out of a hat.

I SPY...

1 You've been summoned for a meeting with P, your spy boss. As you walk into P's office you bump into Miss Spendapenny, P's attractive secretary. Do you...

a) Sit down with her and have a nice natter about the weather and the price of peas these days?

b) Complain that she spelt your name wrong on the last coded fax she sent to you on P's behalf.

c) Flirt with her outrageously but never actually do anything about it.

2 In his office, P informs you that a certain Mr Silvertoe has plans to take over the world, and asks you to go and sort him out. Do you...

a) Ramble on about what an unusual name Silvertoe is and what its possible origins are.

b) Moan that you saved the world last time and you fancy a holiday. And a pay rise.

c) Accept gladly, because megalomaniacs always seem to be surrounded by loads of gorgeous girls who you'll no doubt get to snog.

3 You decide to visit K, who is in charge of secret weapons development. Do you...

a) Ask for a small pistol, so that it doesn't ruin the line of your posh suit.

b) Ask for a small pistol, so that you won't have to pay any excess luggage tax.

c) Ask for a small pistol, a helicopter gunship that fits into a shoebox and some condoms.

4 While on your mission, you are captured by Mr Silvertoe who threatens to kill you. Do you...

a) Start blubbing for your mummy like a big wet blanket.

b) Tut and say "Typical, just my luck."

c) Stay cool and make a few mocking remarks about the state of Silvertoe's mental health, meanwhile eying up any of his female staff.

5 After many exciting chases and escapes from near-death, you find yourself floating on a dinghy in the middle of the ocean, while Silvertoe's underwater HQ explodes in the distance. With you is the beautiful and mysterious Holly Gogently, one of Silvertoes aides who saw the error of her ways. Do you...

a) Compare make-up tips and discuss interior decorating.

b) Start talking about football and cars until Ms Gogently gets so fed up she swims off.

c) Make some smartass wisecrack, fire a distress flare into the air that explodes in the colours of the Union Jack, and then snog Ms Gogently.

NEXT ISSUE

Yes, the second issue of PC GAMES is drawing to a close. But fear not, brave reader — things, as D:ream so wisely sang, can only get better. Ladies and gentlemen, please take your seats and prepare yourselves for...

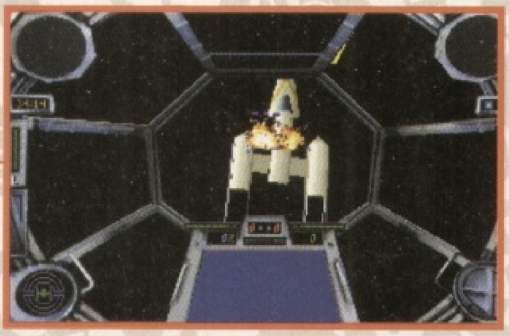
...the fight of the century!

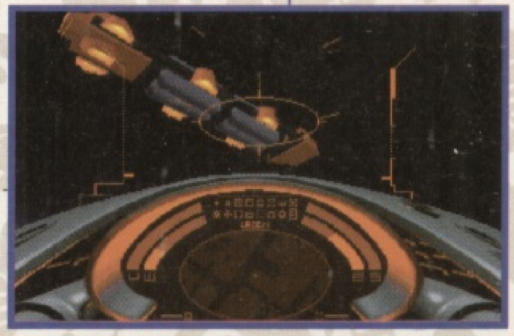
In the next issue of PC GAMES, two pedigree fighters slug it out for the cumbersome title of 'King Of The Space Sim Ring', which is currently held by LucasArts' superb X-Wing.

In the red corner we have the long-awaited TIE Fighter. Created by the X-Wing development team, this is the odds-on favourite and has a strong of chance of returning the King Of The Ring crown to the LucasArts camp.

And in the blue corner we have Inferno, a plucky young contender. Created by DID, the 3D maestros behind the amazing TFX, this could cause a major upset — spies inside the DID camp claim that Inferno has the makings of an all-time classic.

Who will win? Find out on August 29th when we'll unveil EXCLUSIVE REVIEWS of both games! You'll hate yourself if you miss it.





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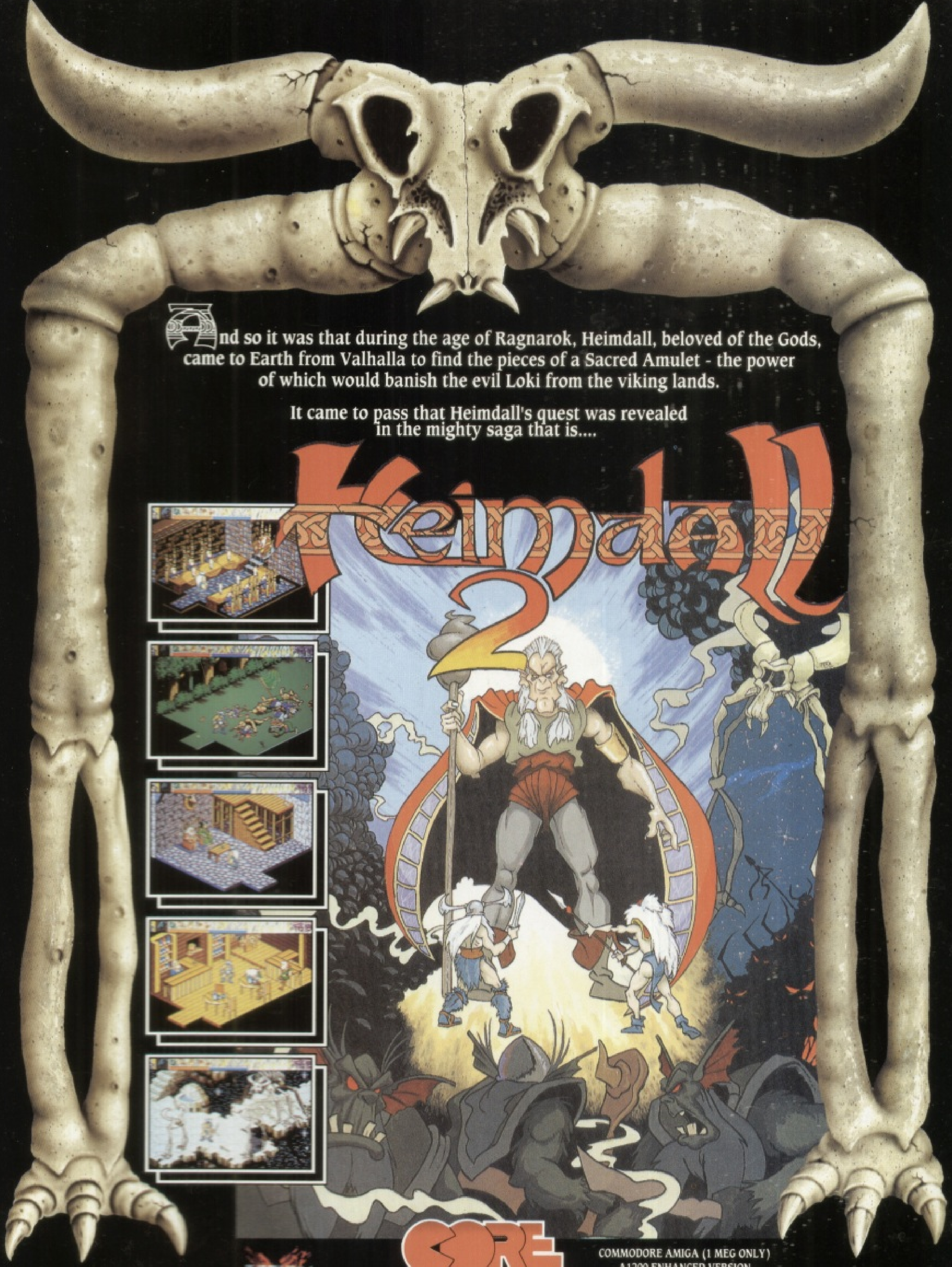

And so it was that during the age of Ragnarok, Heimdall, beloved of the Gods, came to Earth from Valhalla to find the pieces of a Sacred Amulet - the power of which would banish the evil Loki from the viking lands.

It came to pass that Heimdall's quest was revealed in the mighty saga that is....

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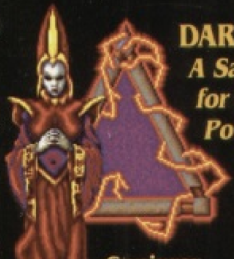

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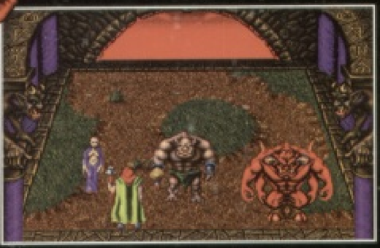
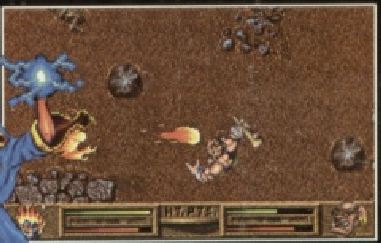
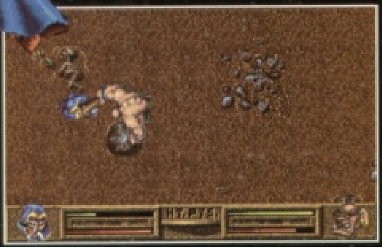


A Templar faces three deadly opponents on the main strategy screen.



Scratch one Troll – it's about to be roasted by a Fire Elemental!



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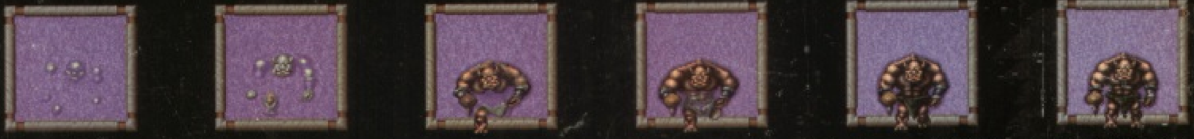

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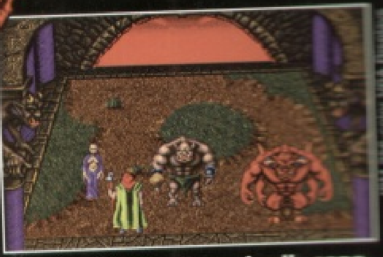
IBM 256-color VGA Display

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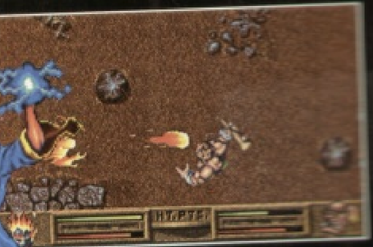

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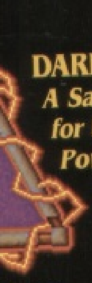

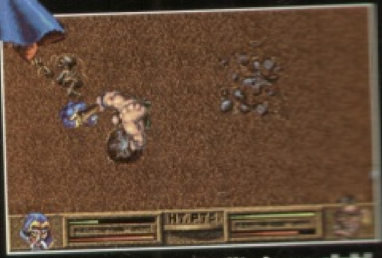

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